

Making Freedom Pay



NORTH CAROLINA
FREEDPEOPLE
WORKING FOR
THEMSELVES
1865-1900

SHARON ANN HOLT

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Sharon Ann Holt

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WORKING FOR THEMSELVES,

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TO

Dore Kroner

AND TO

Michael Zuckerman

with a full heart

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Contents

List of Figures and Tables ix

Acknowledgments xi

Introduction xv

ONE

An Escape Clause:

Farm Tenancy and the Household Economy i

TWO

Split Rails and a Sorrel Horse:

Managing Debt through Household Production 25

THREE

The New North Star: The Quest for a Farm 52

FOUR

Building Up the People:

The Struggle over Church and School 100

Conclusion 130

Notes 139

Bibliography 165

Index 181

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Figures and Tables

FIGURES

1. *Household Production by Farm Tenure Category among Black Farm Families, 1879–1880* 14
2. *Percentage of Crops Picked by Day of the Week on the Rufus W. Wharton Plantation, 1892–1893* 18
3. *Number of Black Landholders and Median Value of Their Holdings, 1872–1898* 58
4. *Value of Holdings in Livestock and Taxable Goods, as Proportions of Land Value, among Landowning Black Farm Families, 1872–1898* 74
5. *Growth in the Number of Black-Owned Farms by Farm Size and Year, 1872–1898* 86

TABLES

1. *Comparison of the Terms of Chattel Mortgages and Annual Crop Liens, 1898–1900* 36
2. *Patterns of Land Accumulation, after the Original Purchase, for Black Landowning Farmers, 1872–1898* 70
3. *Size of Owned and Rented Portions of Dual-Tenure Farms, 1879–1880* 84

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

4. *Farm Equipment and Planting Patterns
by Farm Tenure and Farm Size, 1879-1880* 94
5. *Household Structure by Farm Tenure Type, 1879-1880* 96

Acknowledgments

This book began, formally at least, as a puzzled comment in a graduate seminar with Walter Licht and Drew Faust at the University of Pennsylvania. Frustration at reading a succession of esteemed labor historians who spoke of freedwomen as if they were not working moved me to wonder where freedwomen could have been working that they became so nearly invisible. Informed that that question would make a good subject for a dissertation, I set about answering it. Professor Faust's penance for making that one encouraging remark was the task of seeing the dissertation through to completion, which she did as a generous, attentive, and spirited mentor.

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Introduction

There it was. Section one of amendment thirteen to the Constitution of the United States said, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” Slavery finally appeared in the United States Constitution in its own brutal guise, shorn of euphemism and indirection, on the occasion of its abolition. Note, however, that, while the amendment spoke of slavery, it did not mention freedom. In its silence, the amendment testified to the vacuum into which emancipation plunged all Americans, black and white, slave and free. Slavery was gone, and with it the version of freedom that had been inscribed, with chattel slavery, in American life. A new kind of freedom appropriate to the nation’s future still had to be created, and no one agreed even on its practicality, let alone on its substance, its design, or its proper authors.

Most straightforwardly, this book is the story of how freedpeople made a freedom for themselves. As such, it is part of a growing literature analyzing how, where, and to what purposes African Americans on both sides of the moment of emancipation took charge of their lives and shaped their fate, despite slavery, poverty, segregation, and the enduring legacy of white racist violence.

Recent studies of African Americans on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century plantations and in twentieth-century cities have persuaded historians that an earlier sense of African Americans as no more than tragic victims of white actions, policies, and priorities is both unjust and inaccurate.¹ This book takes up that project, arguing that freedpeople worked resolutely to amass the wealth that paid for their farms, built their churches, and educated their children. Tenant farming did not produce these resources. Rather, small-scale productivity based in the

household, the kinds of activities known to poor and marginal families everywhere, proved to be the key to their achievements. This is a study of how and why freedpeople created household economies, to what degree they succeeded in shaping their own lives, and what their techniques and achievements meant for post-Civil War America.

Frustrated white landlords desperate for field laborers noticed and resented the change in freedpeople's priorities that brought about the household economy. According to estimates made by Ransom and Sutch, "the number of man-hours per capita supplied by the rural black population fell by an amount between 28 and 37 percent" compared to work levels under slavery, 20 to 25 percent of that owing to the withdrawal of black women and children from incessant field labor.² While their former slaves invested in household production, whites fumed that "colored labor, when left to their own account, is generally very unreliable."³

What irritated landlords was not a reduction in labor as such; free blacks worked as hard or harder than enslaved ones had, but they worked much less *for the landlord*. The former slaves had to fight to reserve some labor power for themselves, and their tactics required setting limits on landlords' powers of expropriation. Freedwomen in particular, along with children and elders, exited the fields and took up housekeeping—arduous work that, like rural housekeeping anywhere, produced both goods for consumption and income for the family's use.

Rural households like the homes of North Carolina freedpeople have historically been a locus of production.⁴ Farming wives and children have grown and harvested foodstuffs, prepared and preserved food and drink for the table, designed and manufactured clothing and housewares, and on occasion engaged in buying and trading their home manufacture. Husbands for their part have contributed wood for stoves, made shoes, carved chairs and other furniture, and provided fresh game for the table. The homes of freedpeople hosted all of these activities, and insofar as they did, they were like rural households anywhere.

Home production by freedpeople, though, existed in a social and economic context vastly different from that of either slaves or white households. When slaves made their own clothing or grew their own food-

stuffs, they placed themselves in a devastating predicament, wherein the work they did for themselves and their children made slavery more profitable for slaveowners.⁵ If they earned cash for their work, as Frederick Douglass bitterly recorded, owners claimed the coins.⁶ Household production served admirably for maintenance, but slaves used other techniques to deflect and challenge white oppression.⁷

A comparison of how yeoman whites used household production before and after the war provides an interesting context for assessing the different meanings given to household production by slaves and freedpeople. Stephanie McCurry has argued that, for those yeomen surrounded by the plantation economy of Low-Country South Carolina, home production carried rich cultural and political meaning. Low-Country yeomen found their property rights and masculine prerogatives continually infringed by both gentry behavior and the effects of the local dominance of plantation slavery. In their struggle for autonomy and independence, these men relied on household production by their wives and daughters not only to provide consumable goods but also and crucially to undergird structures of authority and gender relations, as well as to define and support property boundaries.⁸

Studies of white yeoman households after the war concentrate primarily on Piedmont and up-country families, impeding a direct comparison to McCurry's antebellum analysis. But it can certainly be said that these white yeoman households faced different challenges after the war than they had before. To judge from the literature that exists, after the war white yeomen played out their political differences with the planter elite in more overtly political arenas. Postbellum yeoman household production therefore lost much of its symbolic content and became more straightforwardly, and urgently, a matter of family survival.⁹

What yeomen experienced as the bankruptcy of the surrounding plantation economy appeared in the slaves' lives, of course, as emancipation. As it had for white yeomen, the end of slavery transformed the meaning of black household production, but the transformation worked in reverse. For blacks, emancipation added to rather than eliminating the political significance of household work.¹⁰ While both slaves and postbellum yeomen worked principally for their survival, antebel-

lum yeomen and freedpeople worked for their freedom.¹¹ All of them used household production to survive and stave off misfortune, but freedpeople and antebellum yeomen used it also as an investment, as the heart of their rural entrepreneurship.

Moreover, white yeomen could hope that, if they prospered, they would be secure in their achievement. Freedpeople, by contrast, faced a Hobson's choice: they might accept dependent poverty as the price of relative safety, or dare to court violent reprisals by doing "too well." In this context, freedpeople valued a distinct advantage of home production: it yielded usable amounts of income while being almost untraceable and invisible to potentially hostile neighbors. Thus, the postwar South's strict racial caste system combined with its poor and deteriorating agricultural economy to promote and justify freedpeople's special investment in the household economy.

Freedpeople also faced a social challenge unlike that meted out to slaves or to the white yeomanry. Freedpeople worked to generate surpluses not only to accomplish individual or family goals, like the purchase of livestock and land or the settling of children, but also to support the development of an autonomous community life through churches, schools, charities, and other organizations. Desiring and needing to create institutions of their own, free of white control, freedpeople marshaled and applied resources of time, labor, and cash, resources developed within their household economies. This "discretionary income" gave blacks what control they had over the larger course of their community life in the nineteenth century.

Household production by freedpeople shared much with production of slaves and white yeomen. All three groups ate, dressed, found shelter, and warmed themselves with the products of the household economy. Both freedpeople and postbellum white yeomen used household production to fend off indebtedness. But because much more than survival was at stake for freedpeople, their home production was much more than the sum of its mundane parts. Like the beleaguered white yeomen of the antebellum Low Country, freedpeople used household production as an instrument of resistance against planter elites who refused to acknowledge their freedom or their basic entitlements as free

laborers. The household economy provided camouflage for the dangerous business of accumulating needed wealth, generated the resources needed for community uplift, and was, in short, the key to how freed-people made their freedom pay.

Reconstructing freedpeople's household economies in the necessary detail required a limited geographical focus, and this study largely accepts that limit. Granville County, North Carolina, where most of this story takes place, is a tobacco-growing region of the Piedmont sandwiched between the state capital in Raleigh and the Virginia border. It had a sizable postbellum black population; in 1880 57 percent of Granville's population was black compared to 38 percent statewide. Some 220 blacks owned land in the county according to the 1880 census, approximately 5 percent of the relevant population. Forty-two percent of them owned fewer than ten acres. Fueled by a modest boom in bright tobacco leaf, Granville County prospered through the 1880s, and by 1890 black landownership was up to 15 percent; it rose slightly in the next decade to reach 17 percent by the 1900 census tally.¹²

Granville County provided marginally more encouraging prospects to nineteenth-century black farmers than many other regions. In the heart of the Bright Tobacco Belt, in 1880, Granville harvested the third largest tobacco crop in the state. The change from the tobacco crop of the early nineteenth century to the new bright leaf strain provided an unusual opportunity for poor farmers in the 1880s. Bright leaf grew best in thin, sandy soil, land that was considered marginal at best for virtually any other crop. In the 1880s, bright leaf tobacco transformed the Piedmont's worst land into prime land, creating something of a wind-fall for those who owned it. The combination of a large and concentrated black population and the fickle favors of bright leaf tobacco gave Granville's freedpeople at least a fighting chance to prosper.¹³

The same conditions of large population and decent economic prospects, combined with a wealth of surviving county records, makes Granville County a temptation not to be resisted by the historian curious about black economic life.¹⁴ Tobacco agriculture provides a particularly good laboratory within which to study family and household work patterns, since tobacco cultivation demanded the labor of whole families

with peculiar urgency. Successful tobacco culture required constant attention to plucking off suckers and driving out pests, as well as the laborious tasks of weeding, picking, and curing the crop. Many of these jobs were suitable for children, requiring more agility than strength, more flexibility than endurance. And all, of course, could be done by women as well.¹⁵ In addition, tobacco had no “lay-by” time comparable to that in the growing cycle of cotton. Tobacco farmers could not, as cotton farmer Nate Shaw would, spend off-weeks at other tasks to supplement their earnings from the crop; the ability to put family members to work at different tasks simultaneously was crucial in tobacco agriculture.¹⁶

Tobacco farmers, moreover, because they were relatively free of the soft prices and pest infestations that afflicted their cotton-growing counterparts, could dream of prospering and could formulate strategies to better their chances. Cotton farmers surely shared such dreams, but tobacco growers, in their generally more favorable market, had better chances to realize their hopes, and to leave evidence of their successes for historians to retrace. Though both cotton farmers and tobacco farmers relied upon household production, tobacco offers historians both a method of cultivation that highlights family labor and an environment of relative prosperity within which black farmers’ own aspirations could find expression.

In an important sense, however, this book is not about freedpeople, tobacco, Granville County, or the American South at all; it is about poor people and how essential their labors at the margins of the society are to the functioning of the society as a whole. The household production of freedpeople helped to rebuild the southern economy, just as surely as the household economies of the urban poor of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century New York contributed mightily to the mercantile fortunes at the heart of that city’s growing wealth.¹⁷ The home-based sweated labor of the families of handloom weavers in nineteenth-century Philadelphia and France helped to cushion textile capitalists against the vagaries of demand and prices.¹⁸ In the fertile valleys of California, the industrialization of fruit farming drew much of its original capital from

arrangements like those of southern tobacco and cotton fields. As in the postbellum South, wages for workers were held down and profits up while household economies, or more properly the labor of women, children, and elders, kept the labor force alive.¹⁹

While these diverse stories cannot and will not be retold here, the freedpeople's story cannot be fully told without reference to them. The clash of ancient with modern economic values and behaviors so central to peasant studies and international labor history was refracted in the postbellum South through more immediate conflicts over racial entitlements and scarce resources. But modernization issues were far from irrelevant in the South; modernization simply wore a mask fashioned by race and poverty and spoke in a language appropriate to its disguise.

Freedpeople's struggles and strategies conversely are not unique to the postbellum South; they are shared with marginal labor in any social economy that, for whatever purpose, invests more energy and legitimacy in the generation of capital than in the well-being of the population.²⁰ Only when the freedpeople's household economy is seen at once as the archetypal response of marginal labor and as absolutely shaped by the racial and resource politics of the postbellum South can the full significance of the achievement of freedpeople be appreciated. Eliciting that kind of appreciation is the subtext and principal purpose of this book.

The first chapter outlines how and at what price the freedpeople gained the right to profit from their own work, and studies the strategic organizing of their households that enabled them to gather a grub stake in the new regime. Chapter 2 follows them into the credit markets, where sooner or later virtually all southern farmers had to venture. Freedpeople ventured continually but cautiously. They found ways to use credit, despite its infamous inequities, to leverage their small cache of coins into usable wealth. Chapter 3 examines the methods and meanings of purchasing a farm. Backed by household production and cautious borrowing, freedpeople reached out for land, and surprisingly many got it. But land was only the beginning. In chapter 4, the ultimate purpose of the whole enterprise appears. Freedpeople directed the independent re-

sources they could wring from a reluctant society toward the creation of churches and schools, the community institutions without which freedom would never be more than nominal.

Did they achieve what they set out in quest of? Was the household economy enough to make freedom pay? Looking back on the years of farm tenancy, we can still see a small, drafty shack, a single room perhaps, with a bed in one corner and worn denim coveralls hanging beside a few pots and pans on hooks on the walls. Children without shoes play in the dust outside the door; parents without prospects toil from sun to sun. And every year, whether the crop be generous or scant, the family trudges to town, partly in search of fun and a change of scene but finally only to reset the terms of its perennial indebtedness at the local store. That experience was bad enough and common enough to discourage any optimistic assessment of the period.

But consider too the story of Nancy and Ottawa Lee of Oxford township. In 1879, when Mr. E. G. Butler, the federal census taker, arrived at the house of Thomas Sanford, he enumerated along with Sanford's own family two servants, black Ottawa Lee and mulatto Nancy Lee, ages fifty and forty respectively. Several days later Butler unknowingly entered the home of those very same Lees and counted them again in his census tally. Speaking for themselves, Nancy and Ottawa Lee revealed rather different lives than Thomas Sanford had described. They noted that they were husband and wife. Ottawa was thirty-six, not fifty, and Nancy twenty-six, not forty. They shared their home with Nancy's widowed sister, Ann Norman, who worked as a washerwoman. Finally, while acknowledging that they were both domestic servants by trade, the Lees informed Butler that they also owned two acres of land, worth about \$150.²¹

The bureaucratic accident of double-counting has bequeathed to us two versions of the lives of Ottawa and Nancy Lee, and the differences between the two accounts are eloquent. The first enumeration included only that portion of their lives that fell within Thomas Sanford's domain.²² By counting Nancy and Ottawa Lee as dependents in the Sanford household, Butler obscured several central elements of their lives. From the second enumeration we learn that the Lees were not resident

in Sanford's home but kept a productive household of their own, shared with a wage-earning sister. In Sanford's household the difference in their skin color was salient; in their own, they recorded the fact of their marriage.²³ Finally, in Sanford's house they were only servants, while under their own roof they appear both as servants *and* as landowners. Lives full of aspiration and achievement existed right under the noses of white Sanfords and Butlers. They failed to see those lives; most of the records they kept prevent our seeing them as well, but they were and are there nonetheless.

The freedpeople did not build their freedom on wealth. They surely would have, given half a chance, but the only right they received at emancipation was the right to starve. By their own efforts they had to win the right to work for themselves, to save for themselves, to build for themselves, and to define themselves and their communities on their own terms. While southern whites hoped and prayed that emancipation would make no difference to their lives, and northern whites worked hard to institute familiar systems of "free labor" in the defeated Confederacy, the freedpeople found ways to fill the vacuum of emancipation with something new. Maybe they were the only ones who understood how far-reaching the change would have to be. These generations of tenant farmers, all but forgotten between the excitement of emancipation and the promise of the Great Migration, built essential structures of freedom into the economy and culture of their communities, creating a foundation on which the twentieth century would rise.

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One / An Escape Clause

FARM TENANCY

AND THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

If freedpeople “accepted” tenancy as the system of labor organization that was to replace slavery, their “acceptance” implied no compromise of their own goals for freedom.¹ For the freedpeople, tenancy did not represent a stable settlement between their ideal of landownership and the slavery-like gang labor favored by former masters. Freedpeople saw tenancy not as the end of a short post-emancipation period of conflict but rather as a starting point—further back toward slavery than they would have chosen, but a viable starting point nonetheless—from which they would continue to move toward freedom. Faced with the power of southern whites and the complicity of northern whites, freedpeople accepted that the process of defining self-ownership could begin short of owning land. But it would not end there. They would have to find the means to advance toward independent farm ownership from within tenant farming, rather than free of it.

To meet this need, freedpeople elaborated an economic system based in their households, which provided the essential opportunities to earn and save that were largely foreclosed by the terms of tenant and sharecropping contracts. Their system of household production helped them to gain control of and generate profit from their own power to labor, which was their most promising, and only plentiful, productive resource. The labor of whole families was at the heart of the household system, with each person’s particular contribution dependent upon age, sex, overall ability, and the household’s immediate need. Household pro-

duction enabled freedpeople to accumulate significant economic resources without drawing more than minimal attention from the surrounding, and likely hostile, white population. In short, the system helped families keep the relentless demands of tenant farming from entirely foreclosing their own hopes and dreams.

Nested deeply in the larger economic systems of farm tenancy, the freedpeople's household economy nevertheless functioned as a source of independent wealth and as a channel for independent aspiration. Household production was the crucial "escape clause" in freedpeople's agreement to till the white man's land.

The household economy worked for freedpeople because it coexisted with but was not consumed by farm tenancy. The contractual work obligations of tenant farming, whether on shares or for cash, commanded the weekday labor of adult males. The household economy consumed the days, nights, and weekends of every other member of the household and the after-hours labor of adult males.

These two productive venues in freedpeople's lives made a complex structure that defies conventional characterizations. The two parts of freedpeople's economic lives cannot be described accurately as "public" versus "private," or as "cash" versus "noncash." Both economies were public in the sense that their existence was known and their merchandise traded openly. Trade in both economies involved cash as well as goods. Both races participated in both contract and household economies, as did both women and men.

The most meaningful distinction between home-based and contract-based production turns on differences of power and control. Though income from household production was small, whatever household work did produce was available to freedpeople as discretionary income, unlike the rewards of work under a tenant contract—at once a modest and a momentous distinction. Tenancy agreements paid off in housing, clothing, provisions, access to tools, seed, and credit, goods that, under the circumstances, freedpeople had to have but that they could not transform into schools, churches, and farms of their own. Household work paid off in the kinds of things, including cash, that freedpeople

could and did apply to the purposes of family prosperity and community building.

The conditions that shaped work life under a tenant or share contract have received considerable attention, and this study does not propose to add directly to that discussion.² This investigation takes up the analysis of the methods and impact of the household economy, that other side of freedpeople's lives, which, though arguably more important to them, has been far less visible in history.

Framing the discussion this way suggests the need to reconceptualize the household economy as a dynamic and contested center of resource production that reached beyond the confines of any actual home. The concept of a household economy need not describe a physical geography of production so much as a social and economic geography that reflects the flow of resources into and out of freedpeople's control. The boundaries of the household economy were set not by the walls of a cabin or the outlines of a yard but by the continuing power struggle between landowners and laborers. The freedpeople's household economy began wherever landlord entitlement could be denied.³

Though driven by different priorities, household production operated in tandem with farm tenancy. Tenants gained access to homes and to land for gardens by contracting with a planter. Landlords profited from home production by keeping tenant shares low and rations short, counting on gardens and home manufacture to sustain laborers and their families.⁴ Without a contract, moreover, freedpeople, and especially freedmen, risked harassment and arrest under state Black Codes and vagrancy laws. So, contract-based farming for a landlord cleared the way socially, as well as providing the physical location, for the home-based economy to operate.

Though household production was built so intimately into the structure of plantation economics, few if any landlords recognized its ability to generate surpluses *for tenants themselves*, and this was no accident. Freedpeople recognized that open prosperity might attract hostile reprisals and did their best to conceal their achievements from whites. In this, the small scale and perishability of household production served their purposes exactly. No landlord or merchant rode to the family cabin

to see that the sweet potatoes were well tended or to check on how the chickens were fed and housed. Instead, he would ride to the fields to see that weeds were being removed from the cotton rows and suckers plucked from the tobacco. A creditor might know virtually from memory who had a weedy crop but would not know whose children had brought the berries he ate in his pie at supper time or what the children had gotten in exchange. The home economy functioned in an intermediate setting; whites often knew of and benefited from its products, but they knew little of the context of those products, where they came from or what savings they might generate.⁵

The absence of white supervision, besides being a good in itself, also allowed black households to realize precious discretionary income out of their household production, which they could not generate through their work for the landlord. Contract-based work for the landlord brought tenants very little cash, if any, and absorbed almost all available adult male labor. Contract work included all labor a freedperson owed formally to the landlord and all labor over and above such contract provisions that employers extorted. Such labor was closely supervised, minutely accounted for, and commonly paid in goods or in store credit rather than in cash.⁶ Even when a contract specified a cash wage, workers rarely received cash in hand. Throughout the contract year the landlord would furnish a tenant with food, clothing, rum, tobacco, and other goods. The landlord might also pay a tenant's taxes or settle his debts with others. At the annual December settling-up, the landlord would figure the amount promised to the laborer, say eight dollars per month, multiplied by perhaps ten months of work. From that eighty dollars the landlord would subtract the worth of goods furnished to the laborer along with any penalties incurred for unauthorized time off. The remainder would be given to the laborer. Ledger book pages show laborers who, year in and year out, cleared one or two dollars for their year's work.⁷ On paper they made their money in cash; in fact, they got their pay in provisions.

Some surviving merchant account books suggest a certain amount of trade in cash, but the records must be interpreted with caution. For example, Thomas Lenoir, a merchant and landlord in western North

Carolina, routinely credited tenants in cash amounts for days worked, at the rate of 50¢ per day. Freedman John Lenoir held a credit of \$1.50 for “2 days work of self and 1 day of [his son] Uriah.” Ervin, Andy, Larkin, Pervis, and Isaac Lenoir, and Uriah as well, all made similar transactions, receiving credits ranging from 50¢ to \$2.00. However, it is unlikely that these men received those credits as cash payment. Thomas Lenoir specifically recorded the occasions when actual cash changed hands. His reckoning shows that Uriah Lenoir once received “\$2.50 in currency for himself and \$1.00 pd to Miss Polly Anderson at his request for spelling books.” Thomas Lenoir paid Miss Anderson also on behalf of another tenant, Elias Norwood, though Norwood, like Uriah Lenoir, had an ongoing account for credits earned by work.⁸ Thomas Lenoir carefully marked the exchanges of money, distinguishing them from the debits and credits in an ongoing account. Like the contracts that spoke of wages, then, store accounts that enumerate credits in cash finally produced very little hard currency.⁹

Payment in goods allowed laborers little discretion in what their earnings could purchase. Most often, an employer would write a note to the local merchant asking him to give a laborer a specific item. Even though he would in the end pay for the item, the laborer could not alter the note to secure something else he might prefer. An employer’s note for one pound of bacon could only bring the family one pound, more or less, of bacon. If hostile to the local school, the landlord or merchant could refuse to pay the teacher. Discretionary cash, for schoolbooks, the church building fund, or any other need, had to come from somewhere else.

The home-based economy was less formal and more fluid than the production covered by contracts. Home-based production encompassed transactions between whites and blacks and among blacks themselves. Income from the home-based economy came in more forms than income from contract labor, and these resources could therefore be marshaled more readily to meet family and community goals than income dependent on labor contracts or store accounts. Goods and services might, within the household economy, be traded, bartered, sold for cash, or exchanged for favors. Anything that could be consumed could

also be exchanged. Goods exchanged between whites and blacks—eggs brought to a merchant or berries sold to a housewife, for example—would be accounted quite exactly, but the exchange was done outside of any formal obligations. Even staple crops like tobacco and cotton might be exchanged within the home-based economy. Cracked cotton, gleaned from fields after the main harvest, usually by women and children, or tobacco grown on a provision plot or small farm was sold separately from the produce due an employer through a rental or share agreement.

Production within the household economy also encompassed work performed for wages outside of the home itself. Viewed conceptually as a center of resource production for the family, the household economy must include waged work by women, children, and the old, as well as any after-hours or off-season wage-earning by men. Wage earning is conventionally considered the antithesis of household production, but among the freedpeople wages functioned in precisely the same way as, say, truck farming or raising chickens. If a wife or minor child earned wages, she or he did so at the expense of other productive activity for the family, and the proceeds of the outside labor were as a matter of course turned over to the family exchequer.¹⁰ Occasional wage earning by all members was one among many productive strategies farm families exercised on their own behalf. Because wages flowed into the family and remained there for the family to control, wage earning belongs conceptually with, not apart from, other modes of home production. Wages, cash, food, baskets, shoes, or other crafts, along with wild berries picked in the woods and captured fish or game, all were items of material importance in the home-based economy.

To make the most of the household economy, freedpeople had to win control of the labor of all members of the household, an urgent necessity that brought them into conflict with both their former masters and the new Yankee authorities. Freedpeople contended for control of children's labor, for full control over freedwomen's time, and against the extra demands that contracting employers imposed on adult men.

The first Black Codes passed during Presidential Reconstruction provided for the "apprenticeship" of black children to the age of twenty-

one, giving preference in the apprenticeship bonds to former owners. Besides endangering the children and compromising their legal freedom, the apprenticeship laws deprived parents of their very considerable contributions to the household.

Children contributed to the household economy in many ways. If they were not watching infant siblings, young children carried water to workers in the fields, foraged for and traded berries and wild eggs, tended the family garden, or collected kindling. Joseph Adams, farming in North Carolina in the 1870s, thought that the vegetables his children brought in from the family garden might have enabled him to save a dollar or more each month.¹¹ Children might also card cotton, piece quilts, and hold yarn for their mother or an older sister as she spun. Though only a child of nine in the mid-1870s, Elizabeth Johnson Harris stayed up late on winter nights helping her grandmother make quilts and rose early in the spring and summer to hawk produce from her grandfather's garden.¹² Children were always available to run errands into town or carry messages to neighbors. Children helped in some income-producing enterprises like dressmaking or hauling; through their foraging, which they often combined with play, they also provided food for the family table.

As they grew, boys might hunt and fish with their fathers or help with wood-cutting or hauling for pay if the family owned a wagon. William Scott recalled, "When we farmed share [crop] dey took all we made. In de fall we would have to split cordwood to live through the winter."¹³ Girls too sometimes hunted or hauled, but more often they did domestic chores. They might sew dresses, apply ribbons to hats, weave baskets, or candle eggs well past dark, after the daylight work was done.

Most of these tasks continued as children grew. After about age ten field labor was added to the list. As an alternative to farm labor, older girls might go out to nurse or serve in the homes of nearby whites. Older boys, if fortunate, might learn a trade; more often they too chose between service and farm labor.

The apprenticeship statutes passed in virtually all the former slaveholding states threatened all this. White southerners clearly contemplated a system rather like the "apprenticeship" tried only thirty years

before in the British Caribbean. There, apprenticeship had been intended to function as a halfway measure to emancipation, instituted by the British as a gradualist compromise designed to prepare both master and slave for the coming of free labor.¹⁴ In the defeated Confederacy, though, the moment for gradualism had long passed, and freedpeople fought apprenticeship both indirectly and in open confrontation.

In Mississippi and Louisiana, the disappearance of freedpeople from field labor helped pressure white planters to repeal apprenticeship and other odious labor statutes.¹⁵ Freedpeople also sent multiple complaints to Union Army and Freedman's Bureau officials.¹⁶ In North Carolina, two "Yankee officers" rescued young Robert Pool from an unwanted apprenticeship right after the war, when he was kidnapped by a Mr. Cannady, the former owner of Pool and his widowed mother. Cannady had tracked mother and son to Franklinton, North Carolina. Arriving one day to find Robert alone in the yard, Cannady hauled him up upon his horse and carried him away. Pool's mother found out where her son had been taken, procured a wagon and team, and sent them to Cannady's place with the two Union soldiers. Pool apparently saw to it that belongings his mother had been forced to abandon when they left Cannady's place were loaded on the wagon before they left. Pool recalled the pleasure that the soldiers took in having "done a great work in coming down there rescuing me, a poor broken-hearted lad . . . and those men said to me on their way back 'Ain't you glad, sir.' And I said, 'Yes, sir.'" Cannady himself was away having Pool's indenture papers drawn up; the Union soldiers were enough to keep Mrs. Cannady from resisting, and presumably to discourage her husband from trying again. In any case, young Robert remained with his mother near Franklinton until he left to take up a true apprenticeship, learning brickmasonry from his father.¹⁷

If young household members worked hard, so too did the elder ones. But though age and infirmity by themselves rarely ended a person's working life, former owners were far less eager to keep their hold on the elderly.¹⁸ American Missionary Association (AMA) teacher Lucy Haskell, posted in Wilmington, North Carolina, reported finding an elderly freedwoman named Rachel destitute and living by ragpicking. Rachel

slept at night in a ramshackle shed and “thought the Lord was might [sic] good to her for [her landlady] did not charge [her] any rent.” Lucy Haskell was later amazed to learn that Rachel had invited a mother and four children to share the shed with her. Haskell took this for astounding charity on Rachel’s part; it may also be that the family of five and the old woman saw much more possibility in pooling their labor than in carrying on alone.¹⁹

A few commentators found that the opportunity to work for themselves gave elderly former slaves new strength. Frances Butler Leigh commented bitterly that, though elderly freedpeople on her Georgia plantation were “far too old and infirm to work for me . . . let them get a bit of ground of their own given to them, and they become quite young and strong again.” Leigh learned the lesson in part from “aged Charity” who “represented herself to me as unable to move” yet walked miles daily to sell eggs laid by her own chickens to neighboring plantations.²⁰

However little they were valued by former owners, elders contributed a good deal to the household economies of their younger kin. Sarah Louise Augustus reported that her grandmother, Sarah McDonald, a former slave and an accomplished and experienced nurse, worked until her death of pneumonia at age 110. The elder Sarah commuted by train between her home in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and a job nursing a white family in Raleigh, a distance of approximately sixty miles. When she missed a connecting train one rainy night, she sat in the station all night in wet clothing, took sick the next day, and died.²¹ McDonald’s story was echoed in the reports of other former slaves who lived with kin, adding their wages to the household total into their nineties and beyond.²²

Even if they did not work outside their homes, elders still made essential contributions to their households. Thomas and Bettie Hawley, for example, lived with their two-year-old child in Granville’s Tally Ho township in 1880. Bettie identified herself to the 1880 census enumerator as a “farm laborer” rather than the standard “keeping house.” Her mother, Nancy Bass, lived in the house with the Hawley family, and it was Nancy Bass who kept the house.²³ Such a household arrangement was far from unusual.²⁴ Adult women worked in the fields along-

side male kin until children grew old enough to take their mothers' places. If someone could be found to look after the household production while the mother was away, the family benefited.²⁵ In such cases, grandparents could and did take on the role of head of household production.

Reserving the labor of freedwomen provoked the most protracted and bitter struggle in all of freedpeople's efforts to control their family labor.²⁶ The outcome shaped both tenant farming and household production. As Ransom and Sutch have demonstrated, women had provided a significant portion of the prewar labor on southern plantations, and their departure from full-time field labor after emancipation contributed mightily to the "labor shortage" planters bemoaned.²⁷

Freedwomen may have eschewed field labor as a matter of pride and personal desire; families may have chosen to "keep" the female head of household at home both for her safety and to gratify new aspirations to male authority.²⁸ Any of these motives might have been sufficient to discourage adult women from undertaking full-time field labor, had they wished to continue it.

Even without convincing evidence of cultural motives, however, freedwomen's choices about how and where to labor are amply explicable. Freedpeople certainly recognized that a labor shortage, however created, worked to their advantage in negotiating terms with desperate planters. And from the start, regardless of her ability to work, a woman received only one-half to two-thirds of the already depressed male wage for a workday, if indeed she was paid at all.²⁹

Freedwomen could hardly fail to see more lucrative uses for their time and strength at home. Merchant account books from the period record innumerable purchases that suggest the productivity of homes. The account book of Edward L. Blackwell for 1869 to 1871 notes purchases of combs for carding and salt for preserving meat, and multiple requests for cloth and thread. Some of the cloth—the bed ticking, sheeting, jeans, and calico—was likely intended for use in freedpeople's homes. Other more expensive cloth purchases, like the "dress buttons" and the "cass^m" cloth costing \$1.25 a yard, might have been to make a dress for a client.³⁰

Household production paid off for freedpeople in several different ways; that was its peculiar value. First, women occupied in home production supported male wages by making field labor scarcer.³¹ Beyond that, goods grown or made could be consumed at home, saving the expense both of purchasing them and of paying interest on the purchase. Raw piece goods transformed under a mother's eye into salable commodities had value of their own. By thus absorbing the time of young sons or daughters, household production gave the family the benefit of labor that could not have been profitably used in agriculture. The combined impact of supporting male wage rates, saving out-of-pocket, saving interest, and profiting from all the available labor could produce economic value for the household easily comparable to the paltry and uncertain returns of a woman's labor in the fields.

Employers tried to overcome freedpeople's resistance with both violence and stratagem, not just because employers wanted the labor but because freedpeople valued the control of women's and children's work time as an emblem of freedom. Outrages recorded against freedwomen often occurred in the context of labor disputes, but in language and structure the attacks also suggest white fury over emancipation itself and the "freedom" freedpeople were trying to construct. Lucretia Adams of South Carolina was set upon and whipped by eight drunken white men, who told her, "We heard you wouldn't work. We were sent for . . . to come here and whip you, to make the damned [n——] work."³² Northern and European visitors joined southern whites in ridiculing freedwomen who "have aspirations like white ladies" and "make their husbands work while they enjoy the sweets of emancipation."³³

In early labor contracts, employers tried to make a man's contract binding on his family as well as on himself. Freedmen, according to this scheme, were not only heads of their households but literal proxies for their households, so that by signing labor contracts for themselves, they obligated their wives and children to the same labor terms. F. A. Eastic, a South Carolina plantation owner, demanded that a black laborer in arrears for advances of goods and cash put his family to work under the plantation overseer. When the man resisted, he received a "severe tongue-lashing," but he capitulated only when advances of goods were

stopped. Only the reality of starvation forced the family to surrender its freedom; Eastic was clearly prepared to use the man's need to accomplish this surrender.³⁴

Landlords resorted to such pressure tactics because freedpeople rejected the "proxy" interpretation of their contracts. While northerners remained eager to see freedwomen in the fields, Freedman's Bureau officials generally sustained freedpeople in this, partly out of their commitment to free labor ideas, partly out of objections to the character of employers' designs.

Ultimately, freedpeople won the struggle to channel women's labor into household production, but not entirely. The landlords' partial victory appeared in the structure of farm tenancy. One of the great advantages of tenancy from the landlords' point of view was its ability to call out the "lost" labor of women and children. Landlords found that by giving the stingiest terms to their tenants they could claim the fruits of freedwomen's labor indirectly.

In 1879, one North Carolina landlord, W. W. Arrington, a freedman himself and the owner of a thousand acres in Nash County, defended the low wages he paid his tenants by noting that he provided a patch of land, where, he said matter-of-factly, "if a man has a wife, she can take a patch and make a bale."³⁵ Arrington's comment succinctly outlined the profitability of a tenant's home production for the landlord. Arrington paid low wages and offered short rations; the work of his tenants' wives had to fill the gap.

Margaret Thornton, a former slave raised in Four Oaks, North Carolina, suggests what freedpeople nevertheless won. Thornton earned wages as a nurse and laundress, despite her tenant farming husband's protests. She took great pride in her work. Five years old at emancipation, she explained, "I wus brung up ter nurse, an' I'se did my share of dat . . . I has nursed 'bout two thousand babies I reckins. I has nursed gran'maws an' den dere gran'chiles." Her account implies that her own mother may have nursed as well and passed the skill on to Margaret. Thornton goes on discussing the relationship of her nursing to the income of her whole family: "Tom [Margaret's husband] never did want

me ter work hard while he wus able ter work, but I nursed babies off an' on all de time he lived. When he wus in his death sickness he uster cry case I had ter take in washin'. Since he's daid I nurses mostly but sometimes I ain't able ter do nothin'." ³⁶

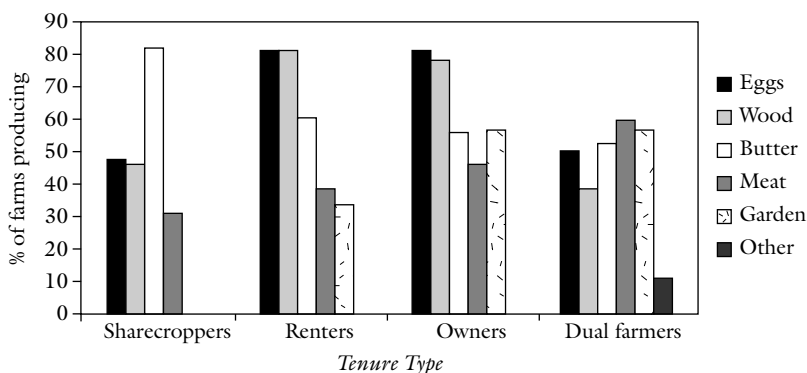
Margaret Thornton's work illustrates the complex results of freed-people's partial victory in the struggle over women's labor. On the one hand, despite her husband's wish to support the family by his own work, the Thorntons found it necessary for Margaret to earn as well. The poverty entailed upon the Thorntons' tenant farming enterprise clearly made Mrs. Thornton's labor cheap and available and kept them from running their household as Mr. Thornton at least had wished.

On the other hand, this arrangement may have been more satisfactory to Margaret Thornton than to her husband, though we can only speculate.³⁷ She earned money using a skill that her enslaved mother or other teacher had used to the profit of her master. With her skills, Mrs. Thornton helped support her own kin as well as creating a network of connections that spanned several generations in satisfied client families, families who may have helped her to support herself or provided charity to her after her husband's death.

Another woman, profiled in the Raleigh papers near the end of her life, used a strategy like Margaret Thornton's to make the most of her skills without severing useful and productive ties with local whites. "Aunt Eliza," childless herself, made a practice of arriving at white people's houses when babies were born, and "spend[ing] several weeks to assist with the Housekeeping and the children." This work, with "thrift and industry," paid for "her little farm and home, which . . . was refuge for all the little outcasts and waifs in the community, [whom] daily she trained . . . to habits of industry and . . . obedience to the laws of God and man." Eliza's particular wisdom emerged when, after she had long worshiped in "white churches after the war, always contributing to the collection, sitting in the gallery, and presenting children for baptism," a black church was built in her community. After that, "her time was divided, for," as the commentator opines, "she loved worship."³⁸ Whether her motive was indeed a great appetite for worship,

Figure 1

Household Production by Farm Tenure Category among Black Farm Families, Granville County, North Carolina, 1879–1880



Source: Compiled from the manuscript returns of the 10th Census of Agriculture, Granville County, North Carolina, 1880.

or whether she simply figured out how to maintain her welcome in the white community without forfeiting the pleasure of worshipping with other black folk, we can only surmise. In either case, she used her skills and personal style effectively to provide for her safety while nurturing needy children in the community, all without giving up the income from her trade.

Census records hint at the widespread reliance of freedpeople upon goods produced by household labor. In 1880, one-third or more of Granville County's black sharecropping households produced eggs, butter, or meat for themselves and/or for sale. Almost half also harvested their own cord wood. The proportion of cash renters and landowners who had garden or livestock produce to draw on was even higher. (See figure 1.) But the census numbers cannot explain who did the labor of tending gardens or raising livestock, so the census cannot answer the question of how family labor, and women's labor in particular, contributed to the survival and prosperity of the freedpeople.

Harvest records from the cotton plantation of Rufus Wharton in Beaufort County, North Carolina, fortunately, do illustrate the long-

term effects of freedpeople's control of female labor. Harvest time brought the highest wages of any part of the year and meant a bonanza to families that could send extra laborers into the fields. One freedman, Hilliard Ellis, explained in 1879 that "harvest was the time of [the] best wages [for women and children]. . . . That is the reason that a good many of them . . . work [only] until the crop is laid up, and then depend on making double wages during the picking season."³⁹

A ledger of harvests kept by Rufus Wharton from 1889 to 1903 itemizes the financial impact of his having to pay separately for the labor of his tenant farmers and the labor of their wives, daughters, and young sons. The family of tenants Elias and Nicy Clark cleared just over eleven dollars from the harvest time work of three women in 1889; their neighbors on the same plantation, a family named May, sent only one teenage daughter into the fields and still reaped the substantial sum of six dollars. With laborers' wages around ten dollars per month, these contributions brought the families a genuine windfall.⁴⁰

Staple crop agriculture provided such opportunities to earn wages as pickers, but there was more. Freedpeople, landowners as well as tenants, also grew staples on a small scale for themselves. Mattie Curtis, a landowner, grew cotton in North Carolina, though she nearly quit trying to sell her first bale for fear of harassment.⁴¹ Joseph Adams, the freedman whose children had brought in vegetables and whose wife "cooked out" for a local white family, tended a "patch" of cotton in addition to his tenant field.⁴²

On the Wharton place, the Clark and May families took on the challenges of raising a cotton crop for their own profit while also producing one for the landlord. At harvest time, these cotton-growing families faced the same need to manage multiple obligations concurrently that tobacco farmers wrestled with for the whole season, and they employed similar strategies. Their success depended entirely on family control of the labor of women and children. The Clarks and Mays made three crucial strategic moves: demanding full family participation, restricting the landlord's access to the labor of women and youths, and making full use of their Saturday half-holiday to pick for themselves.

The Clark family, headed in 1880 by fifty-four-year-old Elias and forty-

five-year-old Nicy, encompassed three generations and at least three households. The neighboring May family was built around two brothers in their thirties, Peter and Rodin, and their families, and traced its origins to elderly Peter and Sylvia May.⁴³ Both Clarks and Mays worked on the Wharton farm from at least 1880 until the farm records end in 1903. Throughout those years both families grew cotton simultaneously for themselves and under contract to Wharton.

Rufus Wharton kept three separate records for each harvest year: a list of extra harvest hands with the poundage they picked each day, a daily log of cotton purchased by Wharton from individual tenants, and a tally of the produce of Wharton's farm by field. In the ledger, Wharton distinguished clearly between the general labor obligation imposed upon adult males under contract and the limited claims he had upon the labor of women and young children in tenant families. The ledger records the individual efforts of women and children by name; the work of their husbands and fathers is expressed simply as pounds of cotton harvested in the fields they rented.

For example, Peter May Jr. and his oldest son, Thomas, age twenty when the ledger began, both worked under contracts with Wharton. The names of May daughters Caroline, Key, and Julia, and a young son, also named Peter, appeared most years on Wharton's list of extra harvest hands. Peter Jr. and Thomas appeared as individuals only on the few occasions when they sold family cotton to Wharton directly. The accounts of Peter's brother Rodin May, Rodin's wife Amanda, and their children show a similar pattern. Rodin was a tenant with twelve acres, and he never appeared separately as a harvest hand, nor did he trade in the family crop. Wharton recorded Rodin's production simply as the crop of the "Holland Field." That is, the crop was not Rodin May's personally; it was part of the produce Wharton expected from his own holdings. By contrast, Amanda May and each of her four daughters, Laura, Hannah, Katy, and Sara, had accounts with Wharton both as harvest hands and for trade in the family crop.⁴⁴

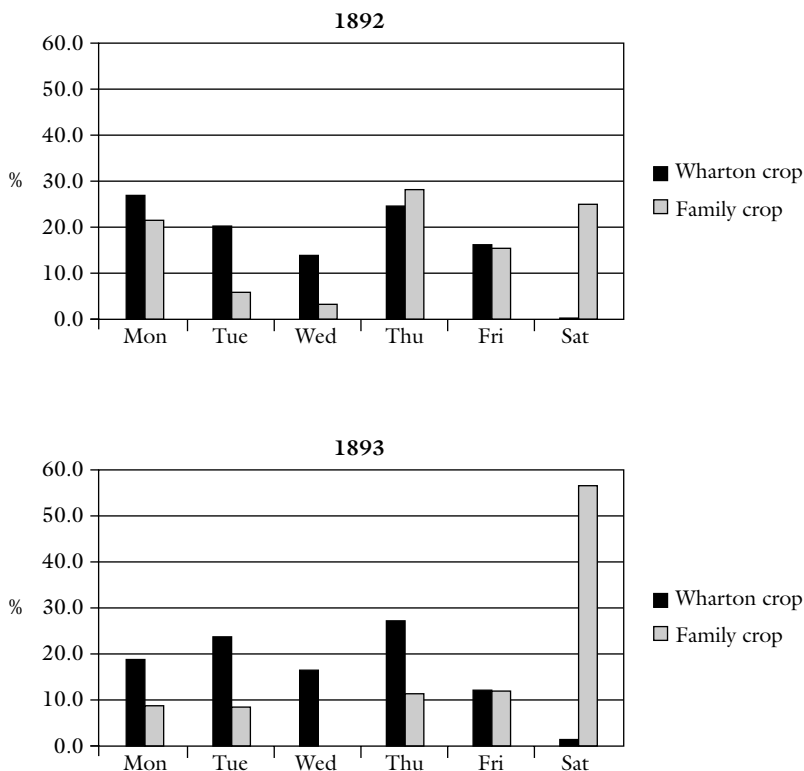
The pattern appears again in the Clark family. Like Peter May, Elias Clark occasionally sold family cotton, but he never worked for extra harvest wages. Elias's wife, Nicy; their teenage daughter Mary Ann; and

young son Wiley earned extra wages and sold portions of the family crop to Wharton under their own names. Both Winny and Caroline Clark, wife and daughter to the Clarks' adult son and neighbor William, also picked family cotton and sold it to Wharton, though tenant William never appeared in the ledger by name. When Mary Ann Clark married Jordan Bryan in the early 1890s, they repeated the pattern once more, with Jordan working only under contract to Wharton, and Mary Ann working during harvest and as the agent for the family crop. Some ten years later, Jordan and Mary Ann's daughter, named Nicy for her grandmother, joined her mother in the family crop and the harvest rush. As the ledger makes clear, the labor of adult males like Rodin, Peter, and Thomas May, Elias and William Clark, and Jordan Bryan belonged to Rufus Wharton by virtue of their contracts. The time of wives, daughters, and young sons remained for the families to control, and Wharton had to account for and reward his use of their labor separately.

Even dividing labor by gender and age would not have given Wharton's tenants enough hands to bring in their own harvest as well as Wharton's. As figure 2 shows, Wharton's tenants harvested the family crop and the contract crop at different times. Family crops were often harvested later in the year (at great risk to the crops) and on Saturdays, while the contract crop consumed the early season and the weekday labors. In 1892, after a long week picking in Wharton's fields with their mother, Laura, Katy, Hannah, and Sara May followed their father into the family's own crop on Saturday. To succeed at the business all members of the household, men, women, and children, had to pick on their "vacation" day, the Saturday half-holiday that most landlords, including Wharton, allowed.

Figure 2 summarizes the harvest patterns for 1892 and 1893. In 1892, harvest on the contract crop stretched from the beginning of September through November 17, with not one single person picking for Wharton on a Saturday. Wharton recorded twenty-four days of picking: seven Mondays, six Thursdays, four each of Tuesdays and Fridays, and three Wednesdays. Earning wages as an extra harvest hand for Wharton was a weekday affair. Family crops in 1892 were harvested until December 6, weeks after Wharton's crop was in. Wharton dealt with seventy-two dif-

Figure 2
Percentage of Crops Picked by Day of the Week
on the Rufus W. Wharton Plantation,
Beaufort County, North Carolina, 1892 and 1893



Source: Compiled from the Rufus W. Wharton Farm Account Book, 1889–1903, David Miller Carter Papers, Special Collections, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.

ferent family crop pickers, most several times, over the three months of the family crop harvest season. Twenty pickers, or 27 percent, showed up on Saturday. Monday and Thursday saw significant picking in the family crop as well, but the striking contrast is the amount of Saturday picking. Not one boll belonging to Wharton, but fully one-quarter of the family crops of Wharton's tenants, was harvested on Saturday.

The following year the contrast was even more marked. The 1893 harvest was larger than the previous year's yield, and the corps of extra harvest hands picked 26 percent more cotton for Wharton than they had in 1892. Extra harvest hands even picked for Wharton on one Saturday, the last Saturday of the harvest, perhaps at his express command. The larger crop demanded more hands in the main fields during the week, and weekday picking in family crops dropped accordingly. In 1893, fully 57 percent of the family cotton Wharton purchased from his tenants was brought to him on Saturday, more than double the proportion of the previous year. The pattern repeats itself every year of the ledger: Wharton's crop is harvested almost exclusively on the weekdays; tenants go to work in their own crops on weekdays if they can but on Saturdays as they must.⁴⁵

Farm tenancy thus reflected a compromise not just about white supervision or entitlement to land but about the extent, meaning, and profitability of freedwomen's field labor. The possibility of women's labor could be used against the tenant family, to shorten rations and shrink payments. At the same time, tenant farming meant that the labor of freedwomen could not be wholly conscripted, nor could its produce be entirely expropriated.

By virtue of signing contracts, adult freedmen provided a location for the household, and the garden plot, woodlots, and other resources used by the family to create its household economy. But as the pattern of Saturday picking on the Wharton place suggests, adult men also contributed to the household economy directly, during the hours and days when they were not obliged by their contracts to work for the landlords. Freedmen's need and desire to grasp these opportunities to work for themselves set the stage for the last conflict over family labor: Were freedmen under contract only responsible for work on the crops, or did they owe their employers extra time for farm maintenance, livestock care, and other agricultural chores? The simmering conflict over the off-season tasks given to adult male tenants reflected not so much the legacy of the task system, as has been argued, as the irreducible importance of male labor, when it could be had, to the household economy.

Landlord W. W. Arrington acknowledged forthrightly that he expected much more than crop work from the men he hired. "If [a tenant] is a good man," he explained, "[one] who can repair gates, make hoe handles and axe-handles, and mend up wagons, I pay him ten dollars a month, give him a patch for his wife, and a house to live in, [and 5 pounds of meat and a peck of corn every week]. Some others that are not quite so good I pay eight dollars . . . The women [laborers] get five dollars and board. Them we don't give any [food] allowance . . . I think where they give more [money] they don't give a patch."⁴⁶ Arrington clearly demanded much more of his tenants than crop work, and docked those who would not do it nearly one-quarter of the already low monthly wage. Arrington's tenants must have felt acutely pinched, since he fixed his wages low, assuming they would provide for themselves, and then expropriated all the extra time available in tasks of service and repair. Such double-dipping by a landlord into tenant productivity would surely have driven many a tenant to protest or relocate.

Household production, whether gardening and foraging, maintenance and housekeeping, wage earning, or growing staple crops, absorbed the labor of everyone in the family in an overwhelmingly important task—meeting basic needs with enough surplus to help the family to better circumstances. The family of Joseph Adams did it: he farmed, his wife earned wages as a cook, their children tended a productive garden. Their frustration was that, even with such unceasing effort, they could rarely hope to put more than fatback and bread on their table.⁴⁷ Freedman Anderson Scales did rather better. He ran a small drayage business in Raleigh and had the support of his family's labor on their "acre homestead." His wife, Cora Dalton Scales, worked with their children on the farm, fertilizing the soil with manure from the dray stable as well as with the leavings of pigs, chickens, and a cow. They had vegetables to harvest all year around, as well as fruit trees that bore abundantly enough to provide both fresh fruit and preserves. Besides helping on the farmstead, the children knew how to forage for berries and apples. In addition to supervising all this production, Cora took in washing. The result of this full family activity was that the Scales family had

“money in the bank.” Anderson and Cora were also leaders in their local African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) congregation.⁴⁸ They had built a substantial life out of a miscellany of low-skill, low-return, highly various occupations.

For Elizabeth Johnson Harris, daughter and granddaughter of North Carolina slaves, the benefits of household production were indeed long lasting. Harris left a manuscript memoir of her life from 1867 to 1923, dedicated to her children. She described the labor system of her entire family, the system to which she owed a happy childhood, an eighth-grade education, which was impressive for her time and circumstance, and the chance to see her own children do even better. Her story reveals not only how family labor was coordinated but also how decisions were made for the interest and long-term benefit of the whole family. As a child, Elizabeth was sent by her mother to live in the country with her grandparents. Her mother lived in town and worked full time as a laundress. Elizabeth’s residence in the countryside relieved her mother of the necessity of leaving the young child unattended while she worked. It also provided labor the older people needed. And it is clear that Elizabeth contributed as much as she could to both households.

Her grandparents farmed a three-acre plot, given for his lifetime to her grandfather by his former master’s family. Her grandparents had built a “little two-room cottage” on the plot, of which Elizabeth had many fond memories. She recorded that her grandfather

was extremely fond of garden work and was always successful in the art of Horticulture. I can remember when I was a little girl just between nine and ten years of age how I would willingly go out early every morning with a large basket of nice fresh vegetables which Grandpa had gathered. I would go out about half past eight o’clock and I would very quickly dispose of all I had selling to the best old families of the Hill, and soon returning to my home with a little purse of one dollar to one and a half. This was really good work in those days, for a little girl then of my size and age, and I was proud of it.

Elizabeth also helped her grandmother produce for the family. Her grandmother and her mother both sewed when they could, and her grandmother made quilts when other work was done. Elizabeth recalled, "I would often sit patiently with her until one and two o'clock at night making quilt squares in small and large pieces. She would cut the squares, and give me a certain lot or number even with hers. This kind of work we would do mostly on the long winter nights, Dear old Grandpa would always have a comfortable fire." From late night quilting to early morning vegetable hawking, Elizabeth led a busy life in her grandparents' home.

She regularly visited her mother's home, where she also contributed to the sewing. More than that, she saw herself as a kind of surrogate housekeeper for her busy mother. She cooked, cleaned, and took care of the house, and "Mamma was always glad to have me do these as she was a regular laundress, and after doing her weeks work, in laundry, cooking and cleaning the house ordinarily she was too tired for these little extras, and she knew that her little daughter would attend to it when she came to visit."⁴⁹ This family system provided as well as possible for the needs of each member. The grandparents had the help of young Elizabeth in their ceaseless labor. The mother was assured of safe and loving care for her child, and Elizabeth herself led what seems to have been a happy though hard-working life, reasonably secure in a home owned by her grandparents. She was also able to receive some education from her literate grandfather and in locally run schools, a substantial benefit her mother may well have taken into account when deciding to part with her.

The Johnson/Harris clan, like the Adams, Thornton, and Scales families and the tenants on the Wharton place, made the fullest use of the skills available to them, trying to find ways to generate a surplus. They did so as a matter of necessity, not of choice. That is, given better opportunities they would probably have behaved differently. Adams would have saved *and* bought eggs to eat. Tom Thornton would have liked to be the sole breadwinner for his family and to provide for his widow. The elder Johnsons most likely needed and desired a respite from work. Nine-year-old Elizabeth was no doubt exhausted by her regimen. She

and her elders probably desired more schooling for her than the eighth-grade education she ultimately achieved. These are not romantic lives; they are lives lived on the economic margin. This is not work people sought; this is work that was demanded of them by their circumstances. This work offered them their only prospect of moving up. And they took it.

It is no accident that the significance of household production has gone largely unnoticed. Household work is routine, it is small in scale, and the immediate results of household labor—food to eat, wood to burn, vegetables to sell, or a child released to go to school—if not invisible in the first place, pass quickly from the scene. But it is precisely these qualities that made household production so important to the freedpeople. The most important characteristics of the household economy were its variety, complexity, and obscurity. Each project produced a little bit; each week's surplus added a mite to the family exchequer. A hauling job this week might become a wood-cutting task next week; a family that needed nursing today might soon call for a midwife or a child-minder. All these activities engaged the freedpeople and all were part of their strategies of survival and accumulation. John Evans, born a slave in North Carolina, remembered that “eve’ybody had work to do in slavery an’ dey gone right on doin’ it sence. An’ nobody don’t git nowheres settin’ down holdin’ their han’s. It do’n make so much diffunce anyhow what you does jes so’s you does it.”⁵⁰ Had the household economy been more systematic, had it operated on a larger scale, it could not have served the freedpeople’s purposes so well.

Of course, had there been no danger, had the nation embraced the prosperity of the freed slaves as it might have, no doubt the freedpeople would have preferred to prosper openly and considerably. But freedpeople spent considerable political capital and economic leverage, not to mention blood and suffering, just to secure the right to labor on their own behalf. With that power, they worked every possibility of the southern social system and every opening in the southern economy to wring from emancipation the resources to create freedom.

But it was not enough. Household production provided a family

barely enough to live on; buying a farm, let alone founding a community, demanded more. Freedpeople found that needed increment, ironically, in the southern credit system, the institution most often, and correctly, charged with epic sins against them. But the struggle for the household economy reinforced in freedpeople lessons learned long ago by slaves about how to squeeze advantage from adversity. Freedpeople had set their priorities, and they remembered them when they borrowed. Their use of credit reveals the same commitment to independence, privacy, and patient accumulation they demonstrated in the struggle for, and embrace of, the household economy. The small sums they could accumulate became larger sums through careful and systematic use of credit. The larger sums, sometimes, would become farms.



Two / Split Rails and a Sorrel Horse

MANAGING DEBT

THROUGH HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION

Southern farms operated on credit more than on currency, and the power of credit to shape the lives of southern farmers is substantiated, ironically, by the widespread and passionate denunciations of credit by contemporaries. Commentators then and now have condemned credit practices for entailing a general economic backwardness on the whole South, dragging white yeomen down to tenancy and virtually reenslaving the freedpeople.

The standard story of southern credit concerns the villainous merchant who bankrupted his customers with usurious interest rates and starved them by demanding ever more cash crop. Southern landlords, fickle partners of the merchants, spent their energies largely trying to snatch a share of merchant profits. Freedpeople, as well as poor whites, were caught between these powerful contending parties. They struggled mightily but fell ever deeper into debt and despair.

However, the southern credit system was more complicated, and more malleable, than the standard analysis allows. Examining southern credit systems in the light of the household economy suggests that despite its odious reputation, credit could actually offer certain positive possibilities for farmers. The ability to borrow, particularly to borrow very small amounts, provided a critical link between the small surpluses accumulated via home production and the more substantial outlays of cash required to purchase land or farm equipment. Credit was a rickety bridge;

even a small debt could plunge a family into disaster. With care, planning, and luck, though, credit could help a farming family advance.

Credit was especially precarious for black farmers because the credit system held particular traps for them. The system was not fashioned chiefly with race in mind; it was designed to enable the cash-starved South to plant, harvest, and market its crops successfully. Credit operations, though, refracted as they were through the tenets of southern racialism, laid heavy burdens on black farmers. Poverty itself made it difficult to obtain credit and avoid foreclosure. In addition, high interest and demands for excessive collateral penalized black farmers. Generalized white hostility to black prosperity, and in particular to black landholding, increased the risk of fraud, harassment, foreclosure, and loss faced by black debtors.

Credit arrangements in the South were, above all, highly personal, and creditors almost universally white, facts that by themselves suggest the risks that black debtors faced.¹ Analyzing county mortgage and lien books by race suggests that creditors much more often demanded excessive collateral of black farmers than they did of white farmers.² Thomas Clement, for example, one of the most important merchants in Granville County, made a loan of fifteen dollars to a freedman named Alexander Curtis in May 1886. As security for that fifteen dollars, Clement demanded "one one-horse wagon and crop of tobacco made on the land of W. D. Kimball in Tally Ho township." J. R. Wilder, a white debtor, borrowed the same amount, fifteen dollars, from a local manufacturing company, guaranteed only by a sewing machine. P. M. Nance, also a white man, borrowed nineteen dollars from Thomas Clement within a month of the loan made to Curtis. Nance put up, for his nineteen dollars, only a buggy and harness set and no crop at all. Lewis Allen, another freedman, borrowed twenty-four dollars from Clement in May 1887, and for that he had to risk not just his crop of tobacco but also his crop of corn, as well as a white horse.³ All debtors signed over property that was worth more than the amount they borrowed, but freedpeople seem to have been required to encumber themselves even more heavily than whites.

Considerations oblique to race *per se* might account for some of these

discrepancies in collateral. Intelligent creditors, after all, would assign differential values to the personal property brought before them simply as a business matter. A well-cared-for horse would certainly be worth more than a horse that was worked constantly year in and year out and fed on short rations. Thus the horse of a rich man would be worth more intrinsically than the horse of a poor man, quite aside from issues of race, and the poor man could legitimately be asked to guarantee his loan with additional goods.

Considerations of poverty, however, cannot mask the impact of race, since the desperate poverty in which most freedpeople lived was in large measure a function of American racial attitudes, northern and southern. Whether because the victorious Yankees largely abandoned the freedpeople to the mercy of their former owners or because those disgruntled former masters defrauded and exploited their former slaves, the freedpeople lived mostly in grim poverty. Thoroughly responsible credit decisions based solely upon poverty inevitably served to disadvantage black farmers disproportionately. Whether a debtor's race influenced a creditor's decisions directly, or only as mediated through poverty, race played a significant part in shaping credit decisions.

The inhospitable structure of the credit system did not, however, fully determine the freedpeople's experience of credit. Nor was race-based exploitation the only aspect of indebtedness that separated blacks from whites. Eric Foner offers the following comment on southern credit, highlighting the most telling general difference between black and white experiences of credit. "The same credit system," Foner argues, "that helped reduce many upcountry whites from yeomen to tenants made it impossible for blacks to use sharecropping as a springboard for the accumulation of money and the acquisition of land."⁴ White farmers who suffered in the grip of the credit system, in other words, were mostly on their way down from sufficiency to poverty. Black farmers who got involved in credit transactions were mostly either stable in their class position or trying to move up.⁵

The direction of movement itself made the relationship to credit very different. Enterprising whites might, with good reason, view indebtedness as both a cause and a sign of trouble and mobilize their household

production to defend their holdings. Enterprising freedpeople could, with equal accuracy, view credit, like household production, as a mode of acquisition.⁶ This is not to argue that freedpeople embraced credit without reservation or that all freedpeople who engaged the credit system prospered thereby. Far from it. The point is that the social meaning and economic experience of debt and credit were shaped by the resources, ambitions, prospects, and history of each debtor as much as by the external structure of the credit system. Important as it was, the structure of southern credit only partially determined the outcome of particular credit transactions.

Reactions to periodic crises of delinquency and foreclosure disclose again the importance of the household economy in freedpeople's drive for security. The home-based economy lubricated the credit system in several ways. First, it generated goods that could be mortgaged. Animal husbandry in particular was essential to sustaining a supply of mortgageable livestock. Second, household production provided goods, such as eggs, garden produce, textiles, and home-brewed alcohol, that could be used as payment against credit obligations. And finally, household production was sufficiently flexible that it could be used to manage credit emergencies; families who faced foreclosure could sometimes increase their household production to meet the payments that pressed upon them. In all these ways the home-based economy of freedpeople helped to control the dangers they faced when they took on, as they had to, the burdens of agricultural debt.

The difficulties freedpeople encountered in seeking credit certainly limited the opportunities that credit could provide. The overwhelming majority of North Carolina's freedpeople found no escape hatch in the credit system. They remained landless and indebted, as did their children after them. Many, however, maneuvered within the credit system trying to acquire farms; some did finally acquire the farms they sought. Freedpeople developed strategies to limit the dangers of indebtedness, and they tried ceaselessly to shape their credit obligations to make the best use of the kinds of resources they could command. Whether they prospered or failed, though, is less important than how they proceeded—and particularly, than the careful use they made of credit to advance

their positions. As freedpeople tried to get and sustain their farms, they left records that reveal the options built into the credit system, as well as the elements of skill, hard work, and good fortune required to turn indebtedness to advantage.

The annual crop lien, which dominates the historical literature, and incarnates the vision of inescapable debt peonage, was only one aspect of the postwar credit system. Two other types of credit, namely store accounts and chattel mortgages, also existed and had different terms and different financial impacts than the annual crop lien.

The crop lien required that southern farmers give a local merchant a lien on all the crops they intended to plant, in exchange for long-term, high-interest credit. Store accounts consisted mainly, though not exclusively, of records of the goods sold under these lien agreements. Chattel mortgages offered short-term credit, sometimes as short as a week or a month, and accepted livestock, farm equipment, or household goods as collateral in addition to crops. Many freedpeople clearly used the annual lien to support their planting and harvesting operations. But the rest of their economic lives, buying and selling land, goods, and livestock, donating cash and goods to schools, churches, and charities, and financing occasional events, including illness and death as well as revivals and holidays, depended upon the kinds of credit available through store accounts and chattel mortgages.

The disadvantages of the annual crop lien system, to landlords, to farmers, and to merchants, were loudly bemoaned by contemporaries and have been extensively cataloged by historians. Interest rates were invariably high, sometimes as high as 50 percent of the value of the goods advanced.⁷ Beyond usury, the possibility of outright fraud existed as well. Merchants commonly marked prices on their stock using a complex alphabetic coding system. Such a system allowed the merchant to camouflage the actual price behind the coding system, keeping farmers in the dark as to how much of their allotted credit they had in fact spent. Hiding behind the indecipherable code, storekeepers could quote prices virtually at pleasure, varying the price by farmer, by credit or cash payment, or by any other standard, including race, that they chose to in-

voke.⁸ The ease with which merchants could keep farmers in thrall year after year by maintaining them in a certain level of debt is clear.

What is equally clear, however, is that many debtors worked hard to minimize the balance against them at the store, in hopes no doubt of ransoming some of the value of their growing crops. Store accounts show repeated efforts by freedpeople to make significant payments against their balances. Many freedpeople paid portions of their store accounts before the annual “settling-up” of the crop lien.

One Granville County merchandising firm, S. M. Evans and Company of Oak Hill township, left records of its trade spanning the years from 1881 to 1889.⁹ Several of Evans’s customers can be traced through a number of years of trading, and their accounts reveal the kinds of goods and services used as payment and hint at aspects of freedpeople’s plans and strategies in the management of debt.

The account of “Lewis Thorp, freedman,” contains a kind of silent tragedy, the story of a family that got along well enough until it was overwhelmed by illness and alcohol. Thorp first did business with Evans and Company in February 1885. His trading was very promising for a while, consisting largely of buying textiles, some food, and a bit of farm equipment and paying his debts mostly in cash. Thorp also bought liquor, though modestly, making only three purchases in the seven months between February and September 1885. In February he bought a half gallon of whiskey; in May, another two pints; and in September, one drink. His total liquor consumption cost him only \$1.50, well under his bills for yard goods (\$4.65), general merchandise (\$3.45), and food (\$2.60). He made two payments in cash, in February and in July, totaling \$7.00. He offered an additional \$4.00 in cash, along with 151 pounds of meat worth \$10.57, toward his debts at settling-up time in December 1885.

Though he was still in debt to Evans, Thorp’s patterns of consumption and payment indicate that he drew on the resources of a productive household. The Thorps raised meat, probably made clothing or mattresses from the thirty-eight yards of cloth they purchased, and kept some kind of garden. Their food purchases consisted mainly of syrup and sugar, suggesting that they raised their own pork, corn, and perhaps

vegetables. The family managed, in 1885, to generate a total of \$11.00 in cash to pay at the store.

In the spring of 1886, the situation began to deteriorate. Lewis Thorp began buying liquor more often, making seven purchases in only five months. He paid \$1.83 for his liquor, well above the 42¢ spent on food, and almost half the amount (\$3.75) spent on yard goods. Thorp's liquor consumption began to have pernicious effects on the family. The Thorps seem to have purchased more yards of cheaper cloth than they had in 1885, producing more textile goods but of lower quality. The family also bought less in the way of general goods and food. Through this period Thorp continued to make cash payments on his account, though he was only able to produce \$3.50 in three separate payments through April and May 1886.

The place of drink in Thorp's general lifeway seems to have changed along with the increase in the frequency of liquor purchases. He now bought his liquor in small quantities, one pint at a time, instead of stocking up for a longer period as he had the previous year. This suggests that he drank his pints while at the store rather than carrying liquor home to consume at leisure, and perhaps with his family. And Thorp not only bought more liquor but also began to trade in liquor, supplying Evans with small quantities of a homemade brew called "tickler." Evans deducted the value of the tickler from Thorp's growing debt. It is important to note that the simple cost of the alcohol Thorp imbibed was not excessive, though it was high enough to overextend the family budget. The most remarkable changes are in his habits of consumption and in the decreasing purchase of items for home use and production in favor of liquor.

The Thorp family increasingly strained to meet its obligations to Evans. Between June 1886 and February 1887, Thorp's account showed the purchase of forty-six yards of cloth, suggesting that the family tried to increase production to pay on the store account. They seem to have succeeded, since cash payments rose again to \$13.00, made in three separate payments in August and December 1886. Lewis Thorp continued to purchase drink, in ever smaller units, buying one pint here and another there, and once ordering only "1 glass." He traded a little tickler,

worth 20 cents. Food purchases stayed low, amounting to 93 cents for the eight-month period, but the family ended the period still in debt.

It may be that Thorp was widowed early in 1887; he certainly fell upon still harder times, and his family seems to have lost much of its productive capacity. In the seven months between February and September 1887, Thorp bought only one and one-quarter yards of cloth, worth 22¢. He bought more food, for a total of \$1.15, and less of general goods (25¢). His liquor consumption increased, though he continued to buy in small quantities, making five purchases (three pints and two “drinks”) totaling \$1.50. If his wife died, one might expect both the decreased home production and increased drinking, perhaps induced by grief and desperation. The change in circumstances is further confirmed by the disappearance of cash payments from the account records. Thorp paid only once before settling-up time, in whiskey (50¢). In September 1887, Thorp gave Evans and Company what must have been his entire crop of oats, one thousand pounds of oats worth \$7.50. That was the first time Thorp had to use his crop to pay his debts at the store.

After making the payment in oats, moreover, Thorp disappeared, leaving Evans holding \$6.57 of outstanding debt. Absconding of this sort was not unusual; Evans evidently despaired of ever collecting from Thorp, noting at the bottom of Thorp’s tally, “Carried to lost accounts.”

The story has a happy ending, at least for Evans. He had underestimated his debtor; one year later, in September 1888, Thorp returned and settled the account in full. He did not begin trading with Evans again, which suggests that Thorp was now making his life in some new location. He may have remarried or in some other way resuscitated his family’s productive capacity. He may have found shelter with members of his extended family, many of whom lived in nearby townships. Whatever his methods, Thorp did regain some kind of economic footing and presumably returned to farming.¹⁰

Thorp’s account illustrates a range of important aspects of both store trading and methods of managing credit. The social aspects of store trading stand out. Store trading was a man’s world. It was Lewis who traveled to town to trade for the whole family, and he found increasing solace in the company of other men at the store. Other accounts

of store life from outside Granville County also suggest the maleness of the store company.¹¹ The availability of drink at the store evidently helped the merchant turn that general storefront sociability into profitable sales.

Perhaps the most striking part of the Thorp account is the evident importance of household production in enabling Thorp to pay Evans in cash. Thorp, like many other traders, both black and white, habitually paid much of his debt in cash. There was hardly an account in Evans's book that did not contain some cash payment. The only period in which Thorp provided no cash, and the only time he was forced to give Evans his crop, coincided with the sudden disappearance of textile and food production. Without household production, Thorp could no longer choose how to pay Evans, and, as a result, Thorp lost a major portion of his crop.

Another measure of the importance of household production in debt management appears in the variety of goods that debtors, including Thorp, offered in payment. Besides cash, Evans accepted Thorp's liquor, meat, and grain to pay his debts. Other freedpeople paid Evans with similarly mixed goods. Henry Knott paid with a clock; Bromfield Ridley offered cash, along with candy, eggs, corn, wheat, and beef. William Thornton brought Evans shoes, a rabbit, a turkey, and a hen, in addition to beef and some cash; James Sandford settled most of his account in cash but added cabbages, peas, corn, and some hauling to round out his payment. Debtors often paid with labor, as Sandford did. Evans credited Henson Wilkerson's account for \$12.00 worth of "hauling," and Daniel Dockett exchanged his work "splitting 476 wooden handrails" for a credit of \$1.19.¹²

The store accounts emphasize the importance attached by debtors to paying portions of their accounts before the totals fell due at harvest. A load of potatoes could be paid off with a half-day's work, a pair of shoes in four days, preventing those purchases from taking a bite out of the crop share.¹³ Thorp, Ridley, Knott, and their neighbors made payments regularly throughout the year, as often as they could. Henson Wilkerson, the debtor who paid by hauling, worked for Evans in June, July, November, and December of 1885. Wilkerson seems to have offered his

services to Evans in the slack seasons of his agricultural labor—any time, that is, except during the strenuous seasons of planting and harvest.

The timing of Wilkerson's payments indicates again the importance of the "off-season" labor of adult men for the household economy. Wilkerson was not a landowner, and he probably owed his working hours to the landlord with whom he had contracted for the year. He had to make the time for hauling out of what "leisure" remained to him after discharging his obligations to his landlord.

Regular payments may have been designed simply to stave off the loss of crops. Daniel Dockett, the rail-splitter, who traded with Evans from 1885 to 1889, seems to have made regular payments in a concerted effort to escape indebtedness altogether. In June 1885, Dockett settled an outstanding account with Evans by giving him a note for \$4.97. Dockett made no payments on his note, nor did he trade with Evans again until two years later, beginning in July 1887. He may have been out of the community, but Evans made no mark on his account indicating that he had lost confidence in the note, suggesting that Dockett remained in Oak Hill township. When Dockett reopened the account, he bought almost \$3 of general goods, then made two cash payments, in September and November 1887, of \$1.35 and \$1.00 respectively. Between December 1887 and July 1888, without making further purchases, Dockett provided a series of payments, in corn, cash, and rail splitting, totaling \$8.69, which brought him within \$3.00 of even. Dockett had given Evans the bulk of his 1887 corn crop, however, and as the summer of 1888 lengthened, his food stores ran low, forcing him to incur another \$1.50 of debt for meat, sugar, and coffee. He nearly regained the lost ground with a payment of \$1.00 in cash at the end of July.

Dockett's plans were short-circuited by the unexpected expense of replacing a "milk cullor"—presumably a device used to restrain cows for milking. Equipment failure was the plague of poor farmers; replacement set Dockett back another \$2.00. He made no further purchases, though, through the fall and winter of 1888. In May 1889 he bought eleven yards of cloth, buttons, and a new hilling hoe and began another drive to retire his debt. That year, between milking, textiles, farming, and garden-

ing, Dockett and his family finally achieved their objective—in two cash payments totaling \$6.64, Dockett settled the account in full in October 1889.

Dockett, like Thorp, depended centrally on household production to pay his store debt. For the long periods during which he bought nothing from Evans the Dockett household must have provided necessities, however sparsely, for itself. Since Dockett had cash to pay, someone in the family probably either sold goods or earned wages. The Dockett family also seemed able to increase home production to meet the emergency of the “milk cullor” replacement and to make a final push toward clearing the debt.

Store accounts were a permanent feature of the lives of southern farmers, notwithstanding the occasional Daniel Dockett who cleared his account. Most farmers valued the store not only for trade but also for sociability. Merchants played a central role in many aspects of southern farm life, including dispensing new seed varieties; taking homemade goods, eggs, or butter on consignment to trade; and disbursing cash (with interest) when only cash would do. Merchants sold school supplies, and they might have hatmaking or dressmaking to put out as well.¹⁴ Though a merchant’s function and the corner sociability of the store were no doubt more mixed and problematic for black farmers than for their white counterparts, trade, and therefore the continual management of store debt, was a part of farm life almost no one could do without.¹⁵

Unlike store accounts, chattel mortgages and annual crop liens were sporadic debts, contracted at will and paid or called in within a specified period of time. Though the management of lien and mortgage debt resembled the management of store debt in certain aspects, the two types of debt were quite distinct. Chattels and liens covered particular purposes, specified time periods, and exact amounts, and they required detailed descriptions of the collateral given in return for the loan. While farmers had little choice about assuming debts at the local store, they could select between chattel mortgages and annual liens to finance their farming enterprise. And the selections mattered. Chattel mortgages

Table 1
Comparison of the Terms of Chattel Mortgages and Annual Crop Liens,
Granville County, North Carolina, 1898–1900

Loan characteristic	Chattel mortgage (N = 122)	Annual lien (N = 60)
Size of loan, in dollars:		
Mean amount borrowed:	\$39.46	\$42.38
Median amount borrowed:	\$35.00	\$34.50
\$10 and less	13%	10%
11–20	12%	14%
21–30	18%	17%
31–40	16%	9%
41–50	19%	12%
51–60	6%	7%
61–70	6%	2%
71–80	3%	10%
81–90	3%	5%
91–100	2%	3%
100 and more	3%	3%
Loan characteristic	Chattel mortgage (N = 122)	Annual lien (N = 60)
Length of loan, in months:		
Total % due in 6, 7, and 8 months:	43%	79%
1 month or less	5%	—
2	3%	—
3	8%	—
4	6%	2%
5	10%	10%
6	21%	27%
7	17%	37%
8	5%	15%
9	4%	7%
10	5%	—
11	5%	2%
12	5%	—
13 mos. to 2 yrs.	2%	—

took a different form than annual crop liens, and the differences gave chattel mortgages a special attractiveness as instruments of debt for poor and vulnerable farmers.

Table 1 summarizes the contrasts between the two types of loan. Liens and chattels were contracted for loans of essentially the same size, but

Table 1 (continued)
Comparison of the Terms of Chattel Mortgages and Annual Crop Liens,
Granville County, North Carolina, 1898–1900

Loan characteristic	Chattel mortgage (N = 122)	Annual lien (N = 60)
When debts are contracted:		
Total % in		
April, May, or June:	44%	83%
January	9%	—
February	10%	3.4%
March	15%	13.6%
April	16%	44.0%
May	17%	28.8%
June	11%	10.1%
July	2%	—
August	3%	—
September	2%	—
October	4%	—
November	7%	—
December	4%	—
Loan characteristic	Chattel mortgage (N = 122)	Annual lien (N = 60)
Type of collateral:		
Personal property only	63.9%	—
Crop only	10.6%	30%
Property and crop	25.4%	68%

Source: Compiled from *Agricultural Liens and Chattels Mortgages*, Books 48 and 51, Granville County, NC (Office of the Register of Deeds, Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, NC).

that exhausts the similarities between them. The typical chattel mortgage was only on personal property, while annual liens were given for crops, usually crops yet to be planted. Liens might be guaranteed by the addition of specific items of personal property, but crops were always mortgaged first. Chattel mortgages could be arranged at any time of the year and last any length of time, from one day to more than a year, while the tenure of annual liens was, almost invariably, the seven- or eight-month period between planting and harvest.

The flexibility of chattels made them very attractive to poor farmers. Within the variable terms of chattels, individual farmers could negotiate the deal most suitable to their immediate circumstances rather than

adapting their precarious situation to the rigid formula of the annual lien. Chattels were by no means free of risk, since creditors usually demanded collateral worth much more than the loan amount. Just as store owners included high interest rates within the prices of their wares, so creditors built their risk calculations into the amount of collateral they demanded.¹⁶ However, for any individual black farmer making the choice between the high cost of lien-based credit and the high cost of chattel-based credit, the chattels still held one signal advantage. As table 1 makes clear, chattel mortgages were much more flexible than annual liens in time, terms, and collateral.¹⁷ To appreciate farmers' attraction to this flexibility, though, requires understanding the risks entailed by mortgaging farm property and produce.

The property and produce eligible to be mortgaged was, most often, the same property and produce that was essential to survival and accumulation. If a mortgage could finance one year's planting, or the purchase of needed livestock, financing the mortgage itself meant risking the loss of other essential equipment, a loss that, at best, might balance the gain. In other words, freedpeople, both landed and landless, often had to mortgage their productive tools in order to retain them. The work of Henson Wilkerson, the Evans and Company customer who earned his credits largely by hauling, illustrates the dilemma. Wilkerson earned \$12.00 hauling goods for Evans. But suppose Wilkerson had had, at some point, to mortgage his wagon in order to buy seed, to replace a cow or mule, or to buy some other equipment essential to his farming operations. If Wilkerson lost either his wagon or his crop, he would suffer; without the proceeds of his crop, he might lose his farm, and with neither farm nor crop, Wilkerson could not hope to prosper. If the mortgage cost him his wagon, though, he would lose the ability to manage his store debts. For small farmers like Wilkerson, economic life consisted of risking one type of productivity—say, a good wagon—to sustain another, in this case the whole farming enterprise.

Great risk, then, was the inevitable consort of farming, especially for farmers as poor as most freedpeople. As one might expect, freedpeople looked for any and every opportunity to minimize and manage those intolerably great risks. The flexibility provided by chattel mortgages en-

abled freedpeople to maneuver around risk much more effectively than did annual crop liens, and so freedpeople used chattel mortgages in preference to crop liens whenever they could.

Chattel mortgages were designed to be loose in form and flexible in content, contrasting in several important ways with the formulaic nature of the annual lien. Chattels allowed farmers to mortgage for cash and then pay cash prices for goods they needed to purchase, rather than taking the value of their annual lien in store goods at high interest and high credit prices. Annual crop liens were an open-ended bargain, under which the debtor signed over the rights to “all the crops which may be made by [the debtor] upon said land, during said year,” in return for an agreement to “make advance of supplies and money . . . from time to time as required, during the year 18——.”¹⁸ The fact that the merchant who held the lien also figured the value of advances only compounded a debtor’s vulnerability. A chattel mortgage was a much more limited bargain, entailing specific goods for an exact amount, not subject to interest except in the case of default, and less vulnerable to fraud.

Another advantage of the chattel mortgage lay in a farmer’s ability to decide what property to risk rather than signing a general lien on everything the farm could produce. Generally, movable property was used as collateral for chattels, items like horses, cows, wagons, buggies, household goods, and guns. One Granville County farmer, Alex Harris, used his sorrel horse John as something of a “cash cow,” mortgaging and redeeming it repeatedly through 1893 and 1894.¹⁹

Under the terms of a chattel mortgage, the amount of the loan determined how much property had to be offered as security. For a chattel mortgage of five dollars, two cows or a wagon and harness set was an adequate stake. Collateral for loans of thirty or forty dollars might include a horse, perhaps two horses, and maybe cows and pigs as well. Specific quantities of particular crops might be offered, in addition to personal property, to guarantee loans larger than fifty dollars. For loans of one hundred dollars or more, debtors frequently had to mortgage personal property as well as all their crops.

The specific terms characteristic of chattel mortgages offered one further advantage to poor farmers—the chance to renegotiate mortgages

that they were unable to retire. When creditor and debtor agreed on highly specific types and amounts of property covered by the chattel mortgage, some items of value remained unencumbered, ready to be used in an emergency. A farmer who mortgaged several cows and a horse, for example, and was then unable to redeem that property at the end of the mortgage period, might still have a wagon, crops, or a mule to offer the creditor in order to extend the period of the loan. Though renegotiation obviously increased the overall risk, it did stave off foreclosure, buying the farmer time to maneuver out of a bad turn of fortune.

Not only did chattel mortgages allow farmers to specify varied collateral, they allowed farmers to use the proceeds of the loan for a variety of purposes other than cultivating crops. Annual liens specified that all the money loaned under their auspices had to be used in the cultivation of a crop.²⁰ Chattels exerted no such authority over the debtor, and chattels were used for an amazing range of purposes. Money raised through chattel mortgages certainly was applied directly to farming, but farmers also used chattel mortgages to buy livestock, farm machinery, wagons, and buggies. Chattels could be contracted to settle debts or to carry debts over from the previous year. One man used a chattel mortgage to guarantee his bond before the county court; a young boy signed a mortgage to purchase a bicycle and cart. Freedpeople also used chattel mortgages to guarantee their installment payments on costly items like draft animals, wagons, and buggies. In such a case, the buyer would sign a chattel mortgage in favor of the seller, with the animal or wagon as collateral. When the buyer paid in full, the mortgage was canceled.²¹

One unusual and extreme case highlights the almost infinite variety of circumstances and terms possible under a chattel mortgage. One summer day in 1894, a freedman named Granville Hunt, in need of an eight-dollar loan, offered in exchange "one pile of stable manure raised by me and the same being the pile now next to the Market house and the same I got from the streets of Oxford, also one pile of manure next to the Alliance WareHouse being the same I raised from the streets of Oxford."²² This mortgage was only for one day, and it is tempting to speculate what the money went for; Hunt might have been courting or

buying a present for some other purpose. He might have sought a stake for a card game. Though we cannot know its purpose, his remains perhaps the most fascinating mortgage taken out in those years. Fertilizer was expensive in the Oxford of the 1890s, and burdensome to collect. Hunt sought and got value for his work.

Chattel mortgages could be used for very large projects as readily as for very small ones. Addison McAdden may have used a series of chattel mortgages to provide his son an adequate portion on the occasion of his marriage. McAdden was probably free before the war. In any case, he and his wife Ann had owned a sixteen-acre farm in Oxford township since 1867, and he was in his early seventies when he signed six separate chattel mortgages between June 1885 and September 1887. After this sudden accretion of debt, McAdden does not appear in the chattel mortgage records again for a year and a half. This unusual pattern looks even more peculiar when the total mortgage burden is calculated. Two of Addison's six mortgages were for \$100, another for \$45, two more for \$25 apiece, and the smallest was for \$17.80. Three hundred dollars is a staggering load of debt for a small farmer to retire in only two years.

In addition to being a farmer, however, Addison McAdden was a tanner. In fact, he had deeded the farm to his wife in 1884, perhaps to protect it from any encumbrances upon his tanning business, perhaps to avoid probate court in the event of his death, or perhaps because Ann, thirty years his junior, did most or all of the farming. Addison tried not to risk the farm in his several mortgages. He mostly offered the tools of his tanning trade for collateral in his mortgage deals, only twice involving the farm. The first mortgage, for \$25.05, was taken on one horse and on the family's tobacco crop of 1885. The last of the six, for \$45.00, included a lien on "one cow, Luke, red-spotted." Otherwise, McAdden encumbered his "carry-all," hides in the tanning yard, and a series of different horses, and he was in debt without a break from June 1885 until September 1887.

McAdden left no direct testimony concerning his purpose in assuming such a burden of debt, but other records suggest two possible explanations. Despite Addison's effort to keep the farm free of debt, the McAdden farm shrunk from sixteen to seven acres between 1885 and

1888. Ann and Addison may have contracted these debts attempting to expand or to save either the farm or the tanning business. The McAddens' family situation suggests another possible explanation. Addison's son, Lee McAdden, got married in December 1887, just months after Addison had retired the last chattel mortgage. Lee and his bride, Louisa Downey, did not settle in Oxford township, and no record of deeds or mortgages can be found in either of their names. However, it is possible that Addison had amassed a sufficient present for Lee to allow him to set up a farm or a tannery somewhere else. Since Addison bought no new land, made no expansion of his tanyard, and incurred no further debts of this magnitude, it is not easy to explain why he contracted these enormous debts. Perhaps he assumed these risks, and bore the losses, in the service of hopes he cherished for his son and new daughter-in-law.

Few debtors had the kind of resources Addison McAdden had, which enabled him partially to choose which assets to encumber. However, the chattel mortgage records do suggest that the freedpeople who contracted these mortgages protected what they could. These debtors shared a rough sense of the relative value of their various types of mortgageable property, and mortgaged them in a certain order of priority. Debtors, of course, were not entirely free to choose what they would offer as collateral. But because a chattel mortgage (unlike an annual lien) did not require any particular type of collateral, some latitude for preference existed. The types of collateral offered by freedpeople suggest that they exercised some control over what goods they chose to risk. Collateral patterns recall the patterns of household production. Collateral choices also hint at some of the strategic decisions black farmers made about property accumulation.²³

The few freedpeople who owned luxury items, like clocks or watches, mortgaged them first. After luxury items, the livestock that freedpeople chose to mortgage first was swine and cattle, the stock they could most easily replace with the resources of the home economy. Horses and mules, along with wagons and buggies, were indispensable farm tools and therefore were offered less willingly. They were also, unfortunately, among the most valuable items poor farmers owned, and their value often made them subject to mortgages, despite the farmers' wishes. Land

itself, though usually more valuable even than draft animals, was even more rarely encumbered. As James O'Hara explained to Senate investigators in 1880, "There is one thing peculiar about this matter; when a colored man possesses land you cannot get him after he has paid for it to mortgage it; he will mortgage anything else in the world; he will cling to it under all circumstances."²⁴ In other words, farm families assumed debt carefully. They avoided risking property that was difficult or impossible to replace, as well as property the loss of which would compromise their productive efforts. They offered first those items which they could either do without or, with careful saving, purchase again.

Crops were encumbered after other movable property, and they too were mortgaged in a patterned order. When constrained to mortgage crops at all, freedpeople chose to limit the liabilities attached to their crops. They offered first whatever portion of their cash crop was already on hand, sometimes specifying the location of the relevant tobacco barns or bales of cotton. If there were no already-harvested crop, freedpeople would mortgage the growing cash crop and a specific portion of the growing corn. If that would not suffice, the total corn and cash crops and specified portions of the wheat or other valuable crops could be added. Only when they had nothing else to offer, when they needed an especially large loan, or when their credit was no longer good would freedpeople mortgage "all my crops of any description whatsoever that I may grow or cause to be grown on this land or any other land I may cultivate during the year 18——."²⁵

Neither pattern of priorities, in goods or in crops, was random. Freedpeople's priorities reflected their general desire to minimize the risks they faced in contracting debt. A crop in hand, for example, was much safer collateral than a crop in prospect. Harvested tobacco had demonstrable value and was not subject to the vicissitudes of next year's growing season. A family could suffer disappointed hopes if this year's crop were lost to debt; losing next year's crop guaranteed continued poverty—or worse. At worst, such a loss might inaugurate a rapid downward spiral of indebtedness, leading to foreclosure and the loss of all a family had saved and acquired.

Preference for mortgaging cash crops over food crops reflected simi-

lar reasoning. A family that lost its food crop could not feed itself without entering or expanding its presence in the high-interest/low-value world of the store account. Families without one year's tobacco crop might be able to eke out the year on what they could raise or patch together. On the whole, freedpeople desired to mortgage first what they could most readily spare, thereby lowering the cost to themselves when and if they could not repay their debt.

Household and kitchen goods were rarely mortgaged, partly because of the extra legal procedures such mortgages required. Household and kitchen goods were legally considered the property of the woman of the household, and not subject to mortgage by a man without the explicit consent of the woman involved, privately sworn before a court officer. Moreover, most individual household items, such as butter churns, chicken houses, and homemade chairs and tables, had little market value. Here as elsewhere, the diminutive scale of the household economy protected it from unwanted outside interest.²⁶

The story of Robert and Ellen Norwood, freedpeople who farmed in Granville County, illustrates the ways in which this complex system could be used to control debt and secure a family farm. In 1872 Robert Norwood, a man in his mid-forties, had only three pigs to his name. He and his wife, Ellen, age twenty or twenty-one, were recently married. They had no children, and they worked the farm together. Four years later they had parlayed those three pigs into a six-acre farm in Oxford township.²⁷ The Norwoods held on to their six acres through thick and thin, weathering the hard times of the 1870s, the increasing tax burden of the 1880s, and the financial panic and race-baiting politics of the 1890s. Over the years of their ownership, their farm rose in taxable value from \$24.00 to \$125.00.

In the 1880s the Norwoods faced a crisis over debt that almost cost them their farm. It began when they tried to buy a horse. In 1887 Robert mortgaged to merchant Thomas D. Clement a "new Tennessee one horse wagon & Harness" as well as "one bay horse named Bill lately purchased."²⁸ He had bought the bay horse from another freedman, Noah Landis, and it was worth \$100.00. Norwood probably undertook

the mortgage with Clement, for \$40.30, in order to pay Landis part of his price.

But the Norwoods could not pay for the horse. Neither Norwood nor Landis owned "Bill" in 1888. Norwood may have defaulted on the debt to Landis, and Landis resold the horse. Alternatively, the horse may have been seized by Thomas Clement, Norwood's creditor, in repayment of the mortgage.

Though they were unable to keep the horse, the Norwoods held on to the Tennessee wagon, a cow, a few pigs, and some household goods. But the enormous debt for "Bill" brought their small but otherwise secure holdings under a cloud. Things got worse in 1888. The original note with Clement came due on June 1, 1888. Barely three months later, on September 3, Robert Norwood mortgaged the Tennessee wagon to a new creditor, the firm of W. L. and R. B. Ragland, this time for \$25.00. Along with the wagon, he gave the Raglands a lien on the corn crop just harvested on the Norwood farm.

This September mortgage suggests that the Norwoods were in some financial straits. Having spent their reserves on the attempt to purchase a horse, the Norwoods may have needed the mortgage to provision themselves through the coming winter. The tardiness of the contract may also indicate that their crop was disappointing and unlikely to bring them a price sufficient to see them through the year.

The appearance of the corn crop in the September mortgage also indicates trouble. Did Robert and Ellen choose not to mortgage their cow? Did the cow already carry a mortgage? Had they lost all of their taxable personal property to the previous year's mortgage? The records do not answer these questions, but they do reveal that the Norwoods were at great risk in 1888. Through the mortgage to the Ragland brothers they stood to lose not only their wagon, an expensive and important piece of productive equipment, but also part or all of their major food crop.

They did lose, everything but their six-acre farm. In 1889 the Norwoods possessed no taxable personal property whatsoever, and for the first time in five years, Robert Norwood signed an annual crop lien.²⁹

Norwood's annual lien agreement reveals several important aspects of the family's struggle to survive. First, Robert Norwood had changed creditors every year. He contracted the annual lien with a different merchant than had held his chattel mortgages, even though all three merchants with whom Norwood treated dealt in both chattel mortgages and annual liens. Norwood may have changed creditors for the same reason other farmers changed landlords, in a relentless search for slightly better terms. Whatever the reason, until 1889 the family was not under the thumb of any single merchant, not forced year after year to renew credit with the same merchant to cover unpaid obligations.

Second, though Robert Norwood shouldered the burden of a crop lien, the crop he staked was not the one growing on his own land. In 1889, the Norwoods arranged to double-farm, renting land from a man named D. Y. Cooper in addition to cultivating their own farm. The crop that Robert mortgaged was to be grown on the Cooper land.

Double-farming, or dual tenure, played an important part in freed-people's efforts to manage credit and tax obligations. Dual tenure, discussed in detail in the next chapter, simply meant farming two farms at the same time under two different types of tenure. Double-farmers usually owned a small tract and arranged to rent another larger farm either for cash or on shares. Double-farming increased both productivity and flexibility for an individual family. For the Norwoods, with children from their seventeen-year marriage now old enough to be helpful on the farm, double-farming provided a way to increase their productive capacity at a time when debt threatened to engulf all they had accumulated.

The Norwoods' strategy was simple. Credit could offer them no further assistance; they were heavily mortgaged and could redeem their goods only through increased production. Dual tenure seemed to offer the best solution. Double-farming could give them access to the landlord's draft animals, compensating for their lack of a horse. The produce of their own farm might feed them through the year while the mortgaged crop paid for supplies. If they could produce enough, at the end of the year they might scramble out of debt and perhaps even get a bit ahead.

The nadir, though, was yet to come. The twenty-three-dollar lien on

the Cooper farm crop was evidently not enough to provision the Norwoods on both farms. In April 1889, during the planting season, they signed yet another chattel mortgage, again with the Ragland brothers, putting up their wagon, harness, and all the tobacco and corn crops yet to be made on their own farm. This was the first time the Norwoods had signed twice with the same merchant. Now every single thing they owned was mortgaged. With this mortgage, the stage was finally set for the conventional tragic ending—the poor crop, the unpaid mortgages, and the lost farm.

But Ellen and Robert Norwood were lucky; the decision to double-farm paid off. Their crops must have been ample, because 1890 saw them still in possession of their original six-acre farm, with eighteen dollars of newly acquired personal wealth besides. By 1891 they had a new cow and a full pigpen. In 1894 they made another try at purchasing a draft animal, this time a mule. It was an old mule, though, and may have died soon after it was purchased. In any case, it was gone the following year, and the Norwoods did not try again.

The story of Robert and Ellen Norwood weaves together the dynamics of debt management, accumulation, household production, and tenure choice. The Norwoods used every technique at their disposal to gain and sustain their farm. They achieved ownership of their farm through slow accumulation of property. They signed a chattel mortgage in an attempt to buy a necessary piece of farm equipment, the horse “Bill,” and then contracted various mortgages and liens in order to save their threatened farm. Finally, Ellen and Robert used dual tenure to increase their production, gaining the margin they needed to pay off their burgeoning debts. They made no effort to acquire additional acreage; all their effort was directed toward simply salvaging the original six-acre farm.

The Norwoods’ story also reveals the impossible bind in which black smallholders often found themselves, having to mortgage their productive resources in order to save them. To farm without a draft animal was to farm with one hand tied behind one’s back, yet the attempt to purchase an animal nearly cost the Norwoods all they had. One of the most fundamental tools of successful farming was thus denied them. The chat-

tel mortgage system simultaneously offered the best hope of increasing their holdings, the surest prospect of ransoming their mortgaged property, and the greatest danger of losing everything. Through one chattel mortgage the Norwoods raised money for a down payment on the horse; through another they tried to stave off the loss of their livestock. The Norwoods just managed to keep their farm by coupling a third chattel mortgage with a lien and a dual tenure arrangement. Nothing could demonstrate more vividly the multiple forms and purposes of chattel mortgages; nothing could capture more graphically the irreconcilable tension between credit as an avenue to advancement and credit as the prelude to bankruptcy.

The Norwoods brought skill and ingenuity to their situation, and they prevailed. Skill and ingenuity, however, were sometimes overwhelmed by sheer misfortune. Unlike the Norwoods, Wesley and Mary Allen were not able to save their farm from the risks that came with debt.

The Allens had done well, very well, for years. Wesley and Mary owned their farm by 1877; like the Norwoods, they weathered the economic crises of the 1870s and survived the increasingly heavy tax burdens imposed through the 1880s. They had successfully eluded the tentacles of the tobacco economy, planting only two of their twenty acres in tobacco. They produced oats to feed both themselves and their horse, as well as corn and wheat, beef, pork, and chicken. Heating and cooking wood was drawn from their own woodlot. They and their five children provided whatever labor the farm required. With land, labor, fertilizer, food, and fuel all within reach, the Allens could have expected a stable future on their own farm.

But in 1887, the Allens lost their farm. When they failed to repay a \$40.00 mortgage, Oxford merchant Thomas D. Clement took possession of the farm and the family goods. Wesley was fifty-seven and Mary was forty-seven that year. They never recovered their farm, and Wesley died landless in 1894.

The Allens' troubles began in 1885, when they took a \$10.30 chattel mortgage on "two one horse wagons also one blind horse named George."³⁰ Probably they were buying the second wagon from their

creditor, one W. D. Fuller. Having made a down payment, Wesley signed the mortgage to cover the rest of their debt. Contracted on November 3, 1885, the mortgage came due on January 1, 1886, suggesting that the Allens expected to pay the remainder of the purchase price from the proceeds of their crop.

Things went badly, though, and the wagon was lost. Most likely the crop was poor, or tobacco prices very low, because not only did Wesley and Mary fail to pay off their new wagon, they also lost all their surplus resources. They were forced to turn to Thomas D. Clement to furnish them for the next crop season.

They still had property to mortgage, and rather than taking out a crop lien, the Allens put up their “stock of hogs and one one horse wagon, crop of corn and tobacco made on [their] own land in Tally Ho township.”³¹ Clement loaned them \$40.60. The agreement was made in May 1886, with the note due the following February, timing that further indicates that the Allens planned to use the loan to plant and harvest one year’s crop.

The Allens, like the Norwoods, found themselves stretched to the limit of their resources. Everything they owned—except their land—was mortgaged. Had they been lucky, they might have saved the farm and recouped some of their position. They might also have survived had they turned to double-farming. But they could not hold on. All their property and their land was lost in 1887.

In March of 1887, one month after the first note to Clement had fallen due, Wesley Allen signed a crop lien with Clement, mortgaging, in exchange for a year’s provisioning, his share of a crop to be grown on the farm of William Bowling. The Allens, landless in the tax list of 1888, never owned a farm again. The attempt to purchase a second wagon, combined with poor crops and high interest, had pushed the Allens into tenancy.

The Allens and the Norwoods experienced the two extremes of possibility built into the southern credit system. One could risk and fail; one could risk and succeed. No recipe for success worked for everyone. The margin for error was so minimal that the luck of the crop season could

play the decisive role. The two stories illustrate vividly the kinds of risks black smallholders faced, as well as the relentless resourcefulness they brought to the problems of managing that risk.

More even than the life of risk, the stories of the Norwood and Allen families demonstrate the limited kinds of success even very fortunate rural freedpeople could anticipate. The Norwoods, for example, even though they saved their farm, never were able to purchase a draft animal, severely limiting the scope of their farming operations. They may have solved the problem by double-farming continually through the rest of the century; they may simply have endured the poverty and hard work of farming without a horse. In either case, the “successful” salvaging of their land did not solve or mitigate the problems they faced as farmers.

In the Allens’ case, the limits are even more stark. The Allens had every reason to expect continued stability on their farm. They had the labor to work it, and the farm produced enough to feed the family. As their children grew older, though, there were obvious incentives for Wesley and Mary to try to increase the productive power of the family. The second wagon that they attempted to buy in 1885 might have been for their oldest son, Amos, to drive, or to use for hauling. Amos was twenty-four years old that year. With a way of earning income separate from the farm, Amos could have both contributed to his family and saved some money to prepare for his own adulthood, perhaps for marriage and for farming on his own. Mary and Wesley were doing no more than any parents might do; they attempted to build on their own success to endow their children’s future. Because their margin was so slim, though, not only were they unable to help Amos, they also lost everything they themselves had acquired.

To be a debtor was to be in perhaps the most helpless and potentially humiliating position in nineteenth-century society; and there was no safety net for black smallholders when they ran afoul of the credit system. But indebtedness was not a one-dimensional experience, with only one structure, one meaning, and one outcome. For southern farmers, black and white, rich and poor, indebtedness was a way of life. For the very poorest—and the mass of freedpeople certainly belonged in that category—debt, ironically, could actually aid in the struggle for up-

lift. Debt could be used to advantage, though, only if it was carefully structured and limited, and supported by the output of productive households.

Each of the three major forms of credit available to southern farmers allowed a different mixture of flexibility and control. Annual crop liens provided enough money for planting, in exchange for an open-ended right to all that a farmer could produce. Store accounts could be endlessly flexible, carried over year after year, but they, like annual liens, swallowed up most of a debtor's profits in interest and price manipulation. Chattel mortgages allowed the most latitude in managing credit obligation. When they worked, chattel mortgages could provide poor farmers with the measure of flexibility and control they required to negotiate the treacherous waters of agricultural credit. So Granville County's black farmers, like their counterparts elsewhere in the South, made frequent and judicious use of them.

The measure of black farmers' experience of credit must be in what they tried, and not simply in what they accomplished. When they were able, black farm families designed their credit obligations to increase their general independence. Many made continual efforts to pay on their store accounts; many juggled their personal property through a succession of chattel mortgages in order to avoid entering the downward spiral of the crop lien. Some used dual tenure to escape the burden of their debts; others simply disappeared, leaving creditors to swallow the debts they themselves had perhaps contrived. If, as the record unmistakably shows, most black farmers never became independent proprietors, they nevertheless left a record of aspiration, persistence, and formidable cunning in the pursuit of their dreams.

Landownership was, in some ways, the abiding purpose of the whole struggle. The quest to own a farm, to gain title to a plot of ground, even if only a acre or two, shaped the lives of black farmers, even though most of them did not achieve it. In this quest, the household economy and the credit system functioned as a two-stage rocket capable of propelling freedpeople from landlessness into farm ownership. The small capital or store of goods accumulated over years of home production could be mortgaged, and the proceeds might purchase the family a farm.



Three / The New North Star

THE QUEST FOR A FARM

Someone rang a warning on the church bell before the sheriff's troops arrived. It was April 19, 1893, and the sheriff of Craven County, North Carolina, was marching on the black settlement of James City to evict the residents. He carried a court order announcing the return of the land on which the town stood, and had stood since 1863, to the control of its antebellum white owners.

When the church bell rang, the people of James City, many of whom worked across the Trent River in New Bern, "dropped their employment instantly" and ran to defend their farms. When the sheriff arrived, he found, "all the buildings closed and locked and the entire population assembled in the Streets." He recorded being "plainly and emphatically told that . . . if we valued our lives we had better not attempt to break and enter any buildings."

A week after James City residents had dispatched the sheriff, the state governor, Elias Carr, arrived with the First North Carolina Militia regiment. The presence of soldiers forced the farmers to back down. Not willing to risk a bloodbath, community leaders led their neighbors in a dignified capitulation. In defeat James City's black farmers agreed to sign three-year leases—to farms they believed they had owned for thirty years.¹

James O'Hara, a black Congressman from North Carolina's Second District, went with Governor Carr to negotiate with the farmers of James City. One wonders what he must have thought of their desperate last stand. Many years earlier, he had confidently predicted that "the negro's

sun in North Carolina is above the horizon and steadily advancing, regardless of dark clouds and rude storms, to a splendid meridian.”² Chief among the auspicious signs was the readiness with which North Carolina freedpeople were acquiring farmland. In 1878 O’Hara reckoned that blacks in his home county of Edgecombe owned upwards of sixteen thousand acres of land “in fee simple title.”³ The courage of James City’s farmers may have impressed the congressman, but this confrontation with a government determined to return black farms to their antebellum owners was hardly the high noon of his dreams.

James O’Hara did not record his thoughts on the near massacre at James City. But the incident there highlights a number of important questions about post–Civil War black landholding in the South. How did freedpeople get their farms? How did they sustain and protect their farms? Why was prosperity so elusive? And what impact did the presence of a few landowners have on the many freedpeople who never owned their farms?

Freedpeople reached out for land at a distinctly unfortunate time in southern history. Gavin Wright has noted that the attachment of southern whites to the land, though numbered among the legends of the Old South, only emerged after emancipation. Antebellum planters, notorious wastrels of the land’s fertility, moved regularly to find new and still-fertile acreage. “When slavery ended,” though, white Southerners, “like players in a game of musical chairs, seized whatever land they had occupied at the time and held it tenaciously.”⁴ Into this desperate land grab, without money, patronage, or protection, came the freedpeople.

For a few short years, the Union Army and the Federal government seemed ready to act as patron in securing farms for the former slaves. The freedpeople at James City were the only group of ex-slaves in North Carolina to receive farms at the hands of Union officials, but they had counterparts in Georgia, who farmed under General Sherman’s Field Order #15, and along the lower Mississippi River, who had been farming since 1862 behind the Union lines.

When federal soldiers took New Bern, slaves in the surrounding area flocked to Union lines to claim their freedom. They were used, as were “contraband” all over the South, to build fortifications, to spy on the

Rebel army, to cook, clean, and launder for the white soldiers. In early 1863, Reverend Horace James, a captain in and the chaplain of a Massachusetts regiment stationed at New Bern, was assigned to the newly created post of superintendent of Negro Affairs at New Bern. It was under James that the freedpeople began to settle on small farm plots, build houses, and create a settlement. Their colony, originally called the Trent River Settlement for its location, was ultimately renamed James City in his honor.⁵

Between 1863 and 1865, the freedpeople along the Trent River made noticeable progress. By 1865, according to Captain James, “Many of the people [were] laying up property, own[ed] mules, horses and carts, or [were] keeping little shops, or running some mechanical trade.” In 1865, in fact, village residents returned a profit of several hundred dollars to Union coffers. James commented presciently that “there seems therefore to be no prospect of this village being abandoned and its people scattered out into the country unless it be done by force.”⁶

James City would not be uprooted by force for nearly thirty years. Unlike their counterparts farther South, James City residents lived for a full generation as all-but-owners of their farms on confiscated land. The length of their tenure underlay their conviction that the land belonged to them and made their ultimate eviction more cruel.⁷ In this, as in so much else, the federal government proved a fickle friend of the freedpeople.

Radical Republican state and local governments also provided occasional avenues to landownership. In Edenton, North Carolina, town commissioners, three of whom were black and two white, sold several lots owned by the town corporation to black men, though it is unclear whether the buyers were freedmen.⁸ The entire town of Promised Land, South Carolina, was created by freedpeople in 1870 on land they had purchased through the state Land Commission. The Land Commission was a remarkable body created by South Carolina’s revolutionary post-war constitution. Under its constitutional mandate, the commission bought up tracts of privately owned land, subdivided them into smaller farms, then offered the farms for sale to freedpeople through long-term, low-interest loans.⁹

The Promised Land community survives to this day, though it has not grown. The boundaries of the black settlement were never permitted to expand, and since farms were small to begin with, families could not consider providing farms for their children by subdividing their holdings. The community, therefore, has increasingly lost its younger members and now acts as the “homeplace”—the emotional center—of a widely dispersed population of third-, fourth-, and fifth-generation descendants. Since the 1920s, Promised Land has welcomed its scattered offspring every August for Homecoming and for the revivals at the community’s two churches. The August festivities bring people “‘down from Chicago, from New York, from Philadelphia, from all over these different places’ to rest, to visit, and to revitalize old childhood memories . . . The train, ever central to community life, [brings] back the same families it had carried away.”¹⁰

Freedpeople might also come into land through the direct gift or personal patronage of individual whites. Elizabeth Johnson Harris recorded that her grandparents, former slaves, lived “on a spot of ground consisting of three acres, [which] was given to Grandpa for his life-time by Mr. Jas W. Bones, a member of the family whom he had served in the days of Slavery. It seemed that Grandpa was a great favourite in the family of his slave-owners and they showed him many acts of kindness.”¹¹ Though they had the land only under life-tenure, Elizabeth’s grandparents built a house on the plot and raised their granddaughter there in relative comfort. Former masters might also bequeath land to former slaves, but Robert Kenzer notes that, in such cases, the heir usually had to fight for his or her rights in court.¹²

William Scott, free before the war but as desperately poor as any freedman, recounted to a Federal Writers Project interviewer how he “got [his] start off” in similar terms. “I am going to use dis man’s name,” he stated, obviously wishing to give credit where it was due. “I went to work . . . for George Whitaker. I drive a wagon for him. He ’lowed me all de waste wood for my own use. This wuz wood dat would not sell good on de market. I hauled it over home. I worked for him till he died, en his wife ’lowed me a little side cr[o]p. I made this cr[o]p, took de money I got for it, and built a little storehouse. I disremember how long

I worked fer Mis' Hannah Whitaker. Den I quit work for her and went to work for myself. I owns dat little storehouse yit . . . en from dat I bought me a nudder home."¹³ Indiana Hawkins, a freedwoman of Warren County, also benefited from white patronage. In 1868, she bought a fifty-acre farm for just ten dollars from her former master, William J. Hawkins. He recorded making the sale, "on account of [Indiana Hawkins's] fidelity and uniform kindness to her Mistress and the children."¹⁴

Stories like Harris's, Scott's, and Hawkins's testify simultaneously to the presence of white patronage and to its limits. Even a family favorite like Elizabeth Johnson Harris's grandfather could not hope for free title to even a small plot of land. And both William Scott and Indiana Hawkins worked for everything they got. Scott in particular was clearly grateful, but the assistance he actually received was trifling—only the chance to work and to keep the proceeds of his work.

Tempie and Exeter Durham combined white patronage with careful saving and hard work. They bought their farm with three hundred dollars they had saved while sharecropping for Tempie's former master, George Herndon, in Chatham County, North Carolina. Before they bought their farm, the Durhams had acquired a horse, a steer, a cow, two pigs, some chickens, and four geese. George Herndon and his wife Betsy gave the Durhams a generous send-off when they moved to their new farm: "Mis' Betsy went up in de attic an' give us a bed an' bed tick; she give us enough goose feathers to make two pillows, den she give us a table an' some chairs. She give us some dishes too. Marse George give Exter a bushel of seed cawn and some seed wheat, den he tole him to go down to de barn an' get a bag of cotton seed." Once they got settled in, the whole family worked on the farm. Tempie said her children "growed up in de fiel' kaze dey was put to work time dey could walk good."¹⁵

It may be that white patronage brought other, less visible advantages, which might also account for freedpeople's expressions of gratitude. Prospering freedpeople, like politically active freedpeople, drew attention to themselves and roused the smoldering resentment of local whites. Freedfolk who acquired their bits of property under the patronage of prominent local white families might have been more secure in

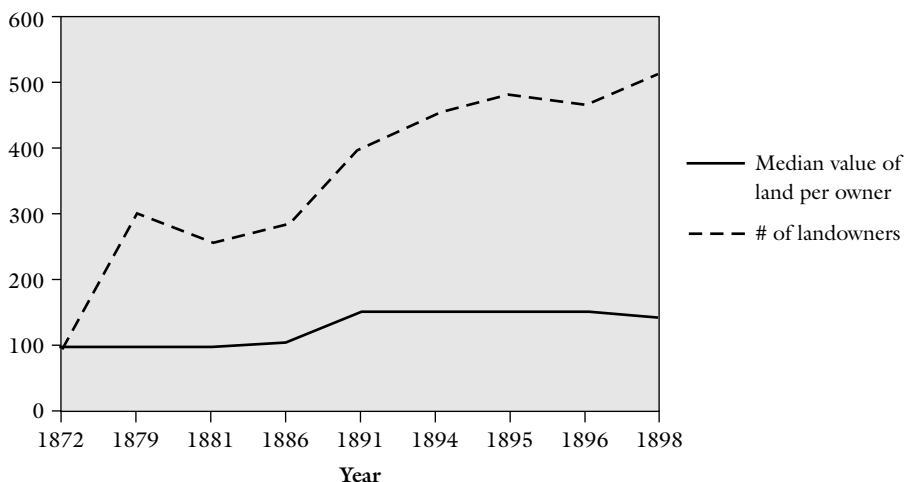
their tenure, and in their general safety, than those who prospered outside of any patronage relationship.¹⁶

Despite the existence, albeit limited, of public and private backing, most freedpeople who became landowners between 1865 and 1900 benefited neither from government assistance nor from private patronage. What they owned they bought with their own sweat. Frank Freeman eloquently summarized the position of most black farmers; “when I was 21 [on] Christmas Eve 1880,” he recounted, “father told me I was my own man and that was all he had to give me.”¹⁷ Freeman, like the overwhelming body of his peers, built what he had from the ground up.

It may be that only a minority of freedpeople ever owned land, that the overwhelming majority of freedpeople began and remained as tenants, farming someone else’s acreage for cash or a share of the crop. But black landownership is not, for this reason, unimportant.¹⁸ Landownership lay at the heart of freedpeople’s aspirations. Landowners, even if few, had symbolic value for their communities; their presence had a leavening effect on the hopes and ambitions of others around them. Landlessness was by no means a foregone conclusion for the freedpeople. To say that whites resisted black landownership is not to say that freedpeople failed to achieve it. Understanding what freedpeople did for and with their land and what impact the presence of landowners had on landless freedpeople opens vistas on the meaning of freedom itself.

Some recent historical studies have contributed significantly to our knowledge of postbellum black landholding. Robert Kenzer’s study of land acquisition by blacks examined both farmers and business entrepreneurs in North Carolina. Loren Schweninger surveyed the whole South, analyzing the experiences of blacks with estates worth one hundred dollars or more.¹⁹ While Kenzer found that both prewar freedom and light skin color correlated strongly with success among postbellum blacks, Schweninger found that mulattoes who had prospered before the war and who dominated the ranks of “leading colored men” in the immediate aftermath of emancipation actually lost ground over time relative to the freedpeople. Schweninger’s study, of course, includes a larger proportion of urban artisans from the major southern cities than would have figured in the under-urbanized economy of North Carolina.

Figure 3
Number of Black Landholders and Median Value of Their Holdings,
by Year, Granville County, North Carolina, 1872–1898



Source: Computed from Tax Lists, Granville County, North Carolina, 1872–1898. Originals at the State Library, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC.

Both studies agree, however, that access to cash and patronage significantly assisted black entrepreneurs in getting a start.

Most black farm families, however, made their way without the patronage of powerful whites, acquiring small parcels of land by dint of unremitting effort. In Granville County, approximately 2 percent of adult black males owned land in 1870, a proportion that grew to 5 percent in 1880, 15 percent in 1890, and 17 percent in 1900.²⁰ Despite the bedeviling conditions of late-nineteenth-century agriculture, black landholding continued to grow toward its peak in 1915. The acceleration of growth in black landholding during the 1880s strongly implies that factors linked directly to the realities of prewar freedom and general emancipation only account for a portion of black land acquisition.

Moreover, as figure 3 shows, before 1886 as many of Granville County's black farmers owned *less* than \$100 worth of land as owned more. Beginning in 1886 the median value of black farms in the county climbed

above \$100, hovering around \$150 for the rest of the nineteenth century. However, most farms remained very small, with median farm size never going above sixteen acres. More important, nearly half (48 percent) of the *growth* in the number of black-owned farms in the county between 1872 and 1898 was in farms of ten or fewer acres. In many years the largest number of new farms were those of only one acre.

Understanding how freedpeople acquired these small farms is a necessary correlative to studies of how they came to own large ones. Freedpeople with many acres may have benefited more often from patronage or kin relationships to white landowners. They also came more often from the tiny handful of slaves with access to craft skills. Those slaves, some of whom were allowed to save some money from their earnings, had ready cash to spend on land during the first years of Reconstruction. They would have been able to purchase larger tracts of better land than their fellows who tried to buy farms in later, more stable times. But to understand fully what farm ownership meant to the former slaves and to the structure of “freedom,” we must examine the lives of the smallholders as well. This chapter follows Granville County’s small black landholders longitudinally, to find out how these freedpeople gained, strengthened, and sustained their grip on land despite depression, falling crop prices, and heavy oppression.

Black smallholders are not easy to find. Though federal census enumerators asked for information on farm tenure, the census is an unreliable source for estimating rates of black landownership because census takers recorded only a family’s *primary* occupation. Following the cues on their forms, enumerators classified all farmers as “own[er]s,” “rent[er]s for cash,” or “rent[er]s for a share of the crop.” This classification system left a large crack for smallholders to fall through.²¹

Granville County farmers James and Dina Harris, for example, appear in the 1880 census as sharecroppers of an eleven-acre farm, but in that same year they paid tax on a farm of an acre and a half. Since one and one-half acres would hardly support a family, the Harrises had evidently also contracted to farm someone else’s land on shares. For the federal government’s purposes it was probably more important to know of their cropping than to know of their ownership. There is reason to be-

lieve, though, that to the Harrises themselves, the one and one-half acres meant much more.²²

Arthur Bass, another Granville County resident, did not even appear as a farmer in the 1880 agricultural census. The population schedule listed him as a well digger. However, his wife, Sallie, owned four acres as well as some farming livestock. The Bass family probably tilled the property, raising either subsistence or cash crops that would fill out their income between well-digging projects.²³ Charles Lee Dalton and his wife, Ellen, former North Carolina slaves, certainly used their land this way. When they came to Madison, North Carolina, in the 1890s, Charles recalled, he, “bought one acre, and built me a house on it, an’ razed my leben [eleven] chillun dyah [there]. My wife was Ellen Irving of Reidsville. We had a cow, pigs, chickens, and gyardum [garden] of vegetables to hope [help] out what I got paid at de mill.”²⁴

The Harrises, who sharecropped more land than they owned, and the Bass family, who kept a small farm to supplement a trade, appear as non-owners in the census.²⁵ These are only two of the many ways black land-holding could be obscured by the priorities of the census.

Comparison of the census enumeration with the Granville County tax lists for the census year reveals a considerable discrepancy between the number of black farm owners in the 1880 federal census records and the number of blacks paying land taxes in the county in 1879–1880. In Henderson township, for example, the 1880 census counted nine black landowners. According to the tax list, there were sixteen, or nearly twice as many. Counting those who owned farm livestock, pigs, mules, and so forth, but whose land was taxed as a “town lot,” the total of blacks farming on their own land is twenty-nine, more than three times the census figure.²⁶

In adjoining Kittrell township, the figures, though less divergent, tend in the same direction: thirteen landholders in the census, twenty in the tax list, twenty-four counting those with town lots and farm animals. In Fishing Creek township, the census counted thirty-five black-owned farms and missed another twenty-five. If this pattern holds for other areas around the South, then census-based estimations of post-

bellum black landholding are capturing only half of the actual number of black farm owners.²⁷

A second serious obstacle exists to relying on the federal census. Census tallies were infrequent, and black landholding could be quite precarious. Black landholders often had difficulty holding on for more than a few years to the land they bought, and anyone who owned and lost land between census enumerations would not appear as a landowner. The 1880 census counted Wesley Burt, for example, as a tenant. Burt had only a thirty-dollar horse and a trio of cows to show the enumerator in 1880, but by 1884 he had parlayed that modest property into a 5½-acre farmstead. He had trouble paying taxes on those acres, and in 1890 he was temporarily landless, his property having been seized for sheriff's sale. He apparently managed to find the money needed to ransom his holdings, for by 1891 he was in possession again of the same acreage. Though Burt farmed his own land from 1884 through 1898, neither the 1880 nor the 1890 census would have counted him as a landowner.²⁸

Reuben Bullock's experience provides an instructive contrast to Wesley Burt's. Bullock did appear in the 1880 census as a landowner. He and his wife, Sudie, owned 165 acres in Tally Ho township. Though demonstrably landowners, the Bullocks perched continually on the edge of ruin. Through the early 1890s, they mortgaged their land and livestock to the same man each April, redeemed it the following March, then presented themselves for the new mortgage one month later.²⁹ Though they owned their farm free and clear only one month in each year, Reuben and Sudie Bullock were landowners by the census definition.

Given the proximity of even large landowners to landlessness, the snapshot of the census is inadequate. People could gain and lose their land between one census and another and never appear as landowners. If bad luck hit in the census year, years of landholding experience could be lost to the public record. In short, freedpeople were undercounted, their landholding was discounted, and shifting fortunes often obscured their accomplishments. The effect of the census is to entirely distort the record of black landholding.

But black communities saw their landowners, even if census enumer-

ators did not. There was very little social or geographical distance between black tenants and black farm owners. They were neighbors both in town and in the rural countryside, they worshiped together, they sent their children to the same schools. Tenant families could see all around them not only the people who owned their farms but also the techniques owners used to buy and retain those farms. County tax lists fortunately allow us also a very detailed look at black property holdings.

Tax lists enumerated virtually all property of any value held by any county resident. Tax lists in Granville County were compiled annually and included all county residents, women and men, black and white. The lists are extant for twenty-one years between 1867 and 1898. They include the names of heads of household, poll taxes paid (by race), number of acres owned, value of acreage, number of town lots owned and their value, and varying measures of personal property. In some years, personal property was given as an aggregate figure. In others, property was itemized, and the list reveals the number of horses, mules, cows, pigs, and other livestock; the value of household goods; farm tools; artisans tools; cash on hand; solvent credits; books; and musical or scientific instruments. Personal property was exempt from taxation up to a threshold of twenty-five dollars. The lists also record property assessments, the amount of tax due and paid, any delinquency or late payment, and occasionally the fact of a sheriff's sale for back taxes.³⁰

This annual accounting of all the real and movable property held by freedpeople permits some analysis of how people acquired land. On the whole, the tax lists corroborate the substance of the sketchy narrative evidence that argues that freedpeople largely secured ownership of their small farms through slow and patient accumulation.

Sarah Walton Harris, born a slave in 1861, offers one version of the process of accumulation. She recalled her mother's striving to support seven children and to buy a farm. Sarah's father, Frank, died shortly after the surrender, and the children lived with their mother, Flora Walton, and Flora's mother, Ellen Walton.³¹ Speaking of her own mother, Sarah recounted, "She got her first money to buy de home by working for de man who give her work after de surrender. The first money she saved to put on de home wuz a dime. Some weeks she only saved 5 cents.

Lan' sold for \$10 a acre den."³² Young Sarah contributed to the farm project herself. On payday every week, she "couldnt run fas' anuff to git to my mother" to give her the twenty-five cents she had earned. In 1937, Sarah Harris was proud to live on land left her by her mother and proud to be surrounded by other black landowners. "You see all dis lan' aroun' here," she said. "It belongs to colored folks. Dey were cut off wid nothin,' but dey is strugglin' an' dey are comin' on fast."³³

James O'Hara gave a different picture of the process of accumulation than did Sarah Harris, one that emphasized the role of male labor on the farm and ignored the contributions of home production and savings. According to O'Hara, "The way a colored man treats his land is this: he will buy it, the first year he will cut down a few trees and make a small crop; the next year he will cut down more trees, dig a little ditch and go on this way for four or five years; afterwards when you would know how the property is which he has taken he cannot tell you himself how he happens to bring the land up but at any rate he has done so, and it cost him nothing except his labor and so they prosper notwithstanding that wages are frequently low."³⁴ O'Hara's rather condescending sketch usefully complements Harris's, because accumulation in fact involved both men and women, and success certainly required years of labor by the whole family as much as it required the hoarding of nickels and dimes.

Saving for a farm also required doing without. Lindsey Faucette recounted to a federal interviewer the willingness of his family to endure privations in their determination to buy a farm. After emancipation, his parents farmed eighteen acres of their former master's land in exchange "for de use of two of [their sons] for a year." As Faucette remembered,

My pappy made a good crop of corn, wheat an' other food on dis land. Dey wuz a time when you couldn' find a crust of bread or piece of meat in my mammy's pantry for us to eat, an' when she did get a little meat or bread she would divide it between us chil-lun, so each would have a share an' go without herself and never complained. When pappy wuz takin' his crop some of de others would ask him why he didn' take up some of his crop and get some-

thin' to eat. He would answer an' say dat when he left dat place he intended to take his crop with him an' he did. He took plenty of corn, wheat, potatoes an' other food, a cow, her calf, mule an' hogs an' he moved to a farm dat he bought.³⁵

By saving pennies, laboring night and day, and going hungry, freed-people sometimes accumulated enough to buy themselves a small farm. All three strategies were rooted in household production.

The tax lists allow us to investigate more generally the importance of labor and home production in freedpeople's farm acquisition ventures. The following reconstruction, though probably overly schematic, is a generally accurate model of the practical process of accumulation. The point of the scheme is not to argue that all families behaved invariably in this way but rather to highlight the presence of a certain patterned order of accumulation, and to show how that order was conditioned by the structure of home production.

Becoming a landholder required first accumulating some livestock and personal property. A land buyer had to have a source of surplus that could be saved or of collateral against which to borrow, and livestock answered both needs. Horses, mules, or cows worth fifty or sixty dollars would be enough to guarantee most of the small purchases these farmers made. And livestock also generated income. Properly fed and tended, one dozen chickens would lay perhaps twenty dozen eggs in a year. Hogs could be counted on not only for pork but for live piglets, which could be sold to other farmers. The agricultural census indicates that a family could produce thirty to fifty pounds of butter in a year from one milk cow. Not all families did produce these items; only those with sufficient household labor to look after livestock and its produce could reap its benefits.³⁶

Lindsey Faucette recalled the modest accumulation of livestock that preceded his father's purchase of a farm. The Faucettes had "a cow, her calf, mule an' hogs" to take when they "moved to a farm dat he bought."³⁷ Tempie Durham, another former North Carolina slave, remembered paying "\$300 we done saved" for the family's farm. While

sharecropping and saving, her family bought "a hoss, a steer, a cow, and two pigs 'sides."³⁸

Poultry and pigs were by far the cheapest stock available and were usually the first animals a farm family acquired.³⁹ Durham and Faucette both mention pigs as a routine part of the stock, and nearly every family had some number of chickens.⁴⁰ Ransom Sidney Taylor, a former North Carolina slave, recalled his mother's successful chicken raising, which began with a chicken saved from their former master's plantation. "One ole hen, she had sense," recounted Taylor. "When de Yankees were killin' de res' o' de chickens she ran for de piney woods and hid dere and stayed till de Yankees left Raleigh, den she come home. Mammy caught her and raised about forty chickens off her in Raleigh."⁴¹ Many former slaves mentioned poultry raising both in slavery and in freedom.⁴²

If a family successfully acquired chickens and some swine, they ordinarily then tried to buy a cow. A healthy, milk-producing cow was worth eight to ten dollars, a heifer was worth about five dollars, and a calf was worth a dollar or two. Milk, butter, and maybe cheese could feed the family and be traded for other needed items.⁴³ There was also the prospect of fresh beef, both to eat and to trade. John O. Kelly, a freedman who ran a livery stable in Raleigh, was questioned in 1880 by Senate investigators on whether landlords ordinarily allowed tenants pasturage for cows. Kelly's reply suggests the immense importance of cows in the quest for land. "I do not know, sir," explained Kelly. "There are not many who are going to live out if they have got a cow and such things as that. They will do business for themselves."⁴⁴ That is, any family able to save enough to buy a cow would probably be able to purchase a few acres of their own and escape the ranks of the landless.

Once equipped with cow, hogs, and chickens, a family could conceivably save enough to buy a horse or mule. Even for sharecroppers, owning a horse or mule could make all the difference in the profitability of farming. Ellis Dickson, a black farmer from Kinston, North Carolina, explained that if a sharecropping family owned a horse, a plow, and some supplies, they paid the landlord only a third of their corn and a quarter

of their cotton crop. If they needed to use the landlord's animal and plow, then the cropping family could *keep* only a third of the corn and a quarter of the cotton.⁴⁵

Old mules could be had for ten dollars, but a good one could cost as much as forty dollars. Young, strong horses ran upward from there. One solution to the high cost of buying and maintaining a horse was to share the animal among several farms. One father-and-son team, Henderson and Rufus Cogwell of Fishing Creek township, shared livestock this way. Henderson owned nine acres, a horse, a mule, and a few pigs. His son, Rufus, owner of the neighboring seven and a half acres, had cows but no horse or mule. Rufus probably plowed with his father's horse, giving his father dairy goods in exchange. One pair of brothers, Peter and Robert Hunt, occupied adjoining farms. Peter kept only a cow and Robert had only a mule. Quite likely, Peter's cow provided milk for Robert's children, while Robert's mule broke the land on Peter's five-acre farm.⁴⁶ Draft animals were the most valuable livestock and the hardest to buy and support. Given the small amount of acreage owned by any one person, a network of as many as, say, four landholders might get all their plowing done by sharing one good mule.

These networks allowed what might be called cooperative accumulation. As might be expected, staying in one place became an advantage to those in quest of a farm. Granville County landowners rarely moved out of their original township, either before or after acquiring their farms. Data is scanty on geographic mobility, but what exists is suggestive. Of just over one thousand families in the sample used for this study, only forty-four appeared in two different townships, and only five moved more often than that. Those who moved once, interestingly, had relatively strong networks within their communities, networks that may have allowed them more mobility without loss of their position or the friendly assistance of neighbors and kin. Those who moved more than once seem to have lost, or never made, these connections.⁴⁷

Once a family bought a piece of land the process of accumulation often ended abruptly. Freedpeople rarely added to their farms after the original purchase. Emily Waller, owner of seven acres in Tally Ho town-

ship in 1879, owned the same seven acres nineteen years later in 1898. James and Louisa Burton of Oak Hill held the same thirteen acres from 1883 to 1898. Ed Betts, who struggled for ten years until he bought his three-acre farm in 1888, held on to it without changes for the next ten years. Sixty-one percent of Granville County's black landowners neither bought nor sold land after their original purchase. Of the 39 percent who did add acreage to their original farms, exactly half made only one additional purchase.⁴⁸

Even particularly fortunate black farmers rarely added to their existing holdings. Linsey Anderson, for example, an Oxford township farmer, was a member of one of Granville County's most prominent free black families. Among his near relations were at least five other landowners, and in 1859, thirty-one-year-old Linsey held title to sixty acres, worth nearly \$300. By 1867 Anderson had lost fifty acres of his prewar farm, but the ten-acre farm he still held was good land. He did reasonably well after 1865, but despite his improving financial position, Linsey bought no more land. Whether he did not want or was not able to repurchase his lost holdings remains a mystery. The fact is that he held only ten acres from 1867 until 1885.

In 1885, Anderson began to expand his farm. He sold several cows and some items of personal property, about \$150 worth, and bought another twenty-five acres. Sometime in the next two years he bought another five acres, so that by 1888 he was paying taxes on forty acres of land, but considerably reduced personal property. He held on to those forty acres, though he was never able fully to restock or refurnish his farm. In 1896, at age sixty-eight, he broke up his farm and devised some of his acreage to his heirs. Linsey Anderson had held more land and held it longer than most of the farmers in the sample, and was lucky enough even to pass on some land to his heirs. Even with his relatively strong position, though, accumulating land was a risky and rare activity.

Except for a few freedpeople who continued to speculate in and acquire land, most shifted abruptly from quite entrepreneurial behavior during the years of patient and purposeful accumulation to very conservative behavior, which stabilized and preserved their hard-won farms. In

this they resembled white smallholders, perhaps because they now too wished to defend rather than acquire property. But there are other possible explanations as well.

Becoming landowners certainly increased in some measure a family's vulnerability to racially motivated harassment. In *Promised Land*, South Carolina, a black landowning farmer was lynched for haggling with the white store owner about the price offered for his corn.⁴⁹ Hilliard Ellis, who in 1880 owned two hundred acres in Wilson County, North Carolina, seems to have adopted a consistent social conservatism, perhaps in part for self-protection. Ellis paid his annual property tax, but he kept his distance from his black neighbors and declined to vote.⁵⁰ Mattie Curtis, a North Carolina freedwoman who grew and sold her own cotton, nearly gave up selling her cotton in order to avoid declaring publicly that it belonged to her. As she told it in the 1930s,

I'll never fergit my first bale of cotton an' how I got hit sold. I was some proud of dat bale of cotton, an' atter I had hit ginned I set out wid hit on my steercart fer Raleigh. De white folks hated de [n——] den, 'specially de [n——] what was makin' somethin' so I dasen't ax nobody whar de market wus. I thought dat I could find de place by myself, but I rid all day an' had to take my cotton home wid me dat night 'case I can't find no place to sell hit at. But dat night I think hit over an' de nex' day I goes back an' axes a policeman 'bout de market. Lo an' behold chile, I foun' hit on Blount Street, an' I had pass by hit several times de day before.⁵¹

Mattie Curtis prospered; working day and night, she bought, cleared, and farmed fifteen acres. She was wise in her caution, though. Prosperous blacks never knew when or where they might draw hostility.

Stable possession of small parcels of land was probably less conspicuous than accumulation of larger tracts. Napoleon Higgins, a free-born black man who owned nearly 485 acres near Goldsboro, testified in 1879 that he could name the "8-12" black landowners who owned most of the 1,500 black-owned acres in the county. But, he added, emphasizing the anonymity of the small holders, "There are a number who own some little lots of four or five acres that I have not mentioned."⁵² Like

the household economy, the small farm was relatively safe because it was inconspicuous. Building upon it, making one's pecuniary gains a matter of public display, would have been unwise.

Even without invoking the possibility of murderous hostility from local whites, though, the prospects for successful accumulation were poor. Ransom and Sutch have proposed that black farmers, with very little untilled land and a much smaller stock of farming implements than white landholders claimed, would have had a hard time generating the resources needed to accumulate.⁵³ It is clear, though, that black farm families did generate discretionary income; the "failure" to accumulate land seems to represent a deliberate, though not an unconstrained, choice. Of the 694 farms detailed in this study, 424 (61 percent) remained stable, neither adding nor losing acreage during the period of black ownership. The 270 changing farms (39 percent) endured approximately 1.8 changes per farm, including 239 gains of acreage and 235 losses. Most black farmers elected stability, since a change in farm size only favored gain by the slimmest margin.

Eight general patterns of accumulation, which are explained in table 2, appeared repeatedly among a sample of the farmers who made more than one land purchase. One-quarter of those who tried to accumulate, including some who made multiple purchases, succeeded in adding land to their farms and prospering thereby. Another 15 percent lost the new land but held on to the original farm. Almost 10 percent of accumulators became so overextended that they were pushed into a rapid decline of fortune, ending in the loss of both the new land and the original farm.⁵⁴ Eighteen percent experienced slower or limited decline, often including unreplaced losses of livestock, but decline nonetheless precipitated by the strain of a new land purchase. For another 3 percent, declining fortunes came gradually, probably brought on by aging, death, or another cause unrelated to the second purchase.

The actual experiences of farmers attempting to add land to their farms show the risks and the payoffs of accumulation more vividly than the raw numbers. Successful accumulators, like Peter Hunt of Oxford township, often made the most modest of gains. Hunt made two purchases subsequent to becoming a landowner in 1872. In 1876 he made

Table 2

Patterns of Land Accumulation, after the Original Land Purchase, for Black Landowning Farmers, Granville County, North Carolina, 1872-1898

Pattern	%
1. Accumulate once, successfully	23 (N = 26)
2. Accumulate once and fall back, without losing original farm	23 (N = 27)
3. Accumulate once, unsuccessfully, with accumulation precipitating rapid decline to loss of entire farm	10 (N = 11)
4. Slow decline after purchase	10 (N = 12)
4a: slow decline, farm not lost	83
4b: slow decline to loss of farm	16
5. Repeated accumulation	15 (N = 17)
5a: repeated accum. and fall back	41
6. Two or more attempts to purchase farm, with loss of farm in between	13 (N = 15)
7. Accumulate once, successfully, followed by slow decline, NOT precipitated by accumulation	3 (N = 4)
8. Purchase to consolidate boundaries	2.6 (N = 3)

Source: Compiled from Tax Lists, Granville County, North Carolina, 1872-1898.

his four-acre farm into a five-acre farm. With the purchase the following year of an additional half-acre, Hunt completed his acquisition project and settled in to farm those five and a half acres at least until 1898. Like Hunt, William Mallory of Fishing Creek expanded his acreage only a little. Mallory began with a farm of three acres, which he held for four years before making one purchase, of two additional acres. He held the resulting five-acre farm without changes for at least seven years.

Even larger landowners, like James R. Pettiford, also of Fishing Creek township, experienced more stability than change. Pettiford held his first farm of seventeen and one-half acres for five years, made one purchase to double its size, and held on to thirty-eight acres for the succeeding fifteen years.⁵⁵

Those were the success stories. Many gained only to lose again. Calvin Crews, with all the advantages of being the son and brother of other Granville County landholders, started in 1872 with fifteen acres, lost those and forty more he tried to purchase over the years, and ended up with an aging horse and cow on a twenty-three-acre farm that was slowly losing its value.⁵⁶ His was a common pattern, where repeated un-

successful attempts to accumulate land sapped the resources of the farm and led to a slow decline in value, usually culminating in landlessness in the next generation.

The exigencies of credit, the chanciness of agriculture, and accidents of mortality all combined to make accumulation of additional land at least as risky as a first purchase. And with some land already in hand, a family's risk calculation would have changed sharply. Black county agricultural agents promoted conservatism with their slogan, "Ten acres clear of debt are better than a hundred with an overdue mortgage."⁵⁷ The vagaries of credit and crops were the same as always, but now there was something of great value to lose, making it harder to shoulder the necessary risks than it had been before. Whatever the mix of reasons, black landowners, having achieved farm ownership, tended to settle in, bringing the process of accumulation to an end.

In trying to protect their farms and no longer taking risks to acquire them, landholding freedpeople behaved cautiously and defensively, making economic calculations resembling those of their postbellum white yeoman neighbors more than those of either landless blacks or antebellum whites. Steven Hahn has documented extensively how the incursions of postbellum credit dismantled the self-sufficiency of Georgia's upcountry white yeomen, prompting defensive responses as yeomen tried to stay above water. As Thomas Clark describes in his study of southern merchandising, "The process of losing possession of farms in the South followed a regular credit routine. Accounts ran hopelessly behind for two or three years with unsettled balances piling up into such considerable sums that lien notes were no longer adequate coverage, then a mortgage was placed upon the land, and the annual deficit continued piling up until it consumed the full value of an unfortunate debtor's possessions. The customer 'assigned' his land to the merchant . . . and then moved his family away to begin anew as a tenant farmer."⁵⁸ Clark's description is even a little arch; some of the records indicate that land could be lost more quickly than this, at least for black farmers. But it must have chilled the hearts of many a yeoman household to know for years that every day they were quite literally eating themselves out of house and home. J. Wayne Flynt preserved a mountain ditty savaging

credit as a cheat and a swindle, where the landowner will “work you all summer and rob you in the fall.” White farmers in north Alabama recalled for the Federal Writer’s Project the days when the local people lost their independence, and mourned that the young people anxious to leave for the cities could not appreciate the irreplaceable value of owning what you had free of a mortgage.⁵⁹ White yeomen knew the pain of slipping down from landownership; freedpeople knew how hard it was to get there in the first place. Both, as a consequence, guarded their farms with care.

The experiences of Henry C. Grandy and his wife, Lottie, provide an example of how the elements of the land acquisition process appeared in individual lives. The Grandys indeed built their way up to land ownership by buying livestock first and using the resources generated through their livestock to buy their farm. Henry was the son of Miles Grandy, a longtime Granville County resident who struggled along for his whole life without land, indeed with too little property of any kind to interest the assessors. Henry inherited nothing from his father and entered the tax lists in 1878 at age twenty-four, paying nothing but his poll tax. He and Lottie had been married four years, and they had two young sons. A child on the way turned out to be a daughter.

The Grandys began to purchase livestock, and one year later, in 1879, they owned a pig and two cows. The young couple probably bought them with borrowed money, confident that, with two adults to do the work, they could make enough to pay the note. Henry’s sister, fourteen-year-old Lucy, came to live with them, probably to care for the children, enabling Lottie to work to help pay for the livestock. One cow died in 1879, and instead of replacing it, Lottie and Henry bought two more pigs. When the census taker visited in 1880, he noted the presence also of five chickens, which might have been on the Grandy farm much earlier. But with chickens, pigs, and a cow, Lottie and Henry were making their way.

In two years, their efforts had made them landowners. In 1881, Henry paid tax on a nine-acre farm on Gibbs Creek in Fishing Creek township. They must have done well, because by 1883 they had increased their holdings to twenty-two acres. Most of the new acreage was probably

woodland or pastureland, which was much cheaper than tillage. Woodland or pasture would have provided nearby forage for their cow and helped the family save the costs of buying fuel. But the Grandys never had much of a margin; they struggled to keep their farm and to maintain their stock. They were occasionally late to pay their taxes, and once delinquent.

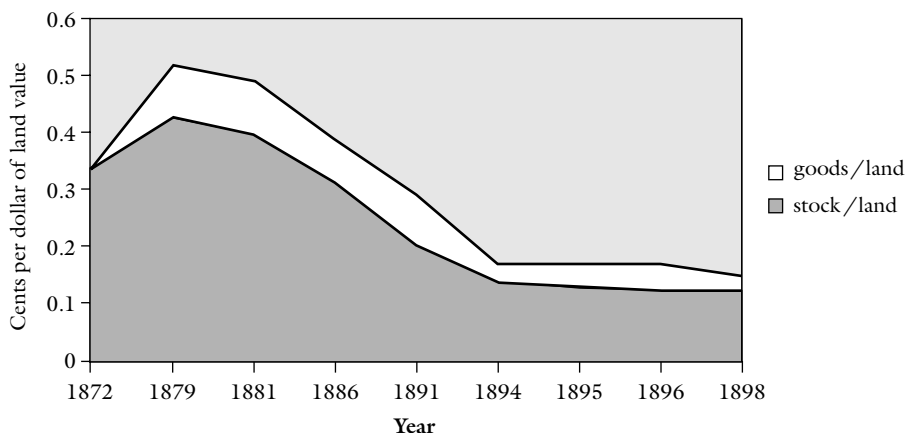
In 1886 misfortune struck. Henry died suddenly at only thirty-six years of age. Lottie fought to keep the farm, but without two working adults it was not easy. Henry may have mortgaged the farm during his life, or perhaps Lottie mortgaged it after his death. Whatever the case, by 1889 the farm was smaller by half than at Henry's death. Lottie presided over ten acres, living without livestock or farm tools of any kind. But she was not defeated. In two years she had saved enough to acquire a few pigs. Those pigs, when raised, slaughtered, and sold, gave her enough to buy another cow.

By 1892, Lottie and her children, now eighteen, fifteen, and twelve, were once again enjoying the relative security of a ten-acre farm and some stock to work it. Their struggles did not end, though. Taxes were an increasing burden, and many years the family seems to have sold some livestock in order to avoid delinquency. Despite those efforts, Lottie was delinquent in 1894 and again in 1898. There is no evidence of further land mortgages, though, and when the century ended, Lottie Grandy was still in possession of the family farm.⁶⁰

The Grandy family's experience illustrates again the impossible bind in which smallholding freedpeople found themselves. It goes without saying that livestock was a critical component of any farm, but for farmers as poor as most freedpeople, that simple axiom was fraught with tension. Animals were needed to work the farm, of course, but selling or mortgaging the animals was often the best way to raise money to pay taxes on the farm. Since animals provided labor, food, and fertilizer, losing one's animals put one's whole productive capacity in jeopardy. Yet, if one did not mortgage the animals, the farm itself might be lost to tax delinquency or debt. In other words, small farmers repeatedly had to risk losing their farms in order to keep them.

One answer to these pressures was to raise cash by selling and mort-

Figure 4
Value of Holdings in Livestock and Taxable Goods, as Proportions
of Land Value, among Landowning Black Farm Families,
Granville County, North Carolina, 1872–1898



Source: Computed from Tax Lists, Granville County, North Carolina, 1872–1898. Originals in the collection of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC.

gaging household goods. James O'Hara noted that black landowners would do almost anything to avoid mortgaging their land, and patterns in the tax lists bear out his assessment. Small farmers indeed seem to have used their holdings in goods and in animals to protect their grip on the land itself.⁶¹ Figure 4 details the relationship of holdings in land, animals, and goods among Granville's black farmers in the half-century after emancipation.⁶² Holding on to the land was unmistakably the first priority, with animals and goods coming second and third.

There is no mistaking the desire for goods, but it is equally clear that goods could be dispensed with in hard times. In 1872, for example, Granville County's black landowners held an average of ninety-eight dollars' worth of land. For every dollar's worth of land they owned, they owned about thirty-three cents' worth of livestock, but not one pennyworth of taxable goods. By 1879, with land value rising not at all, animal value rose to forty-three cents on the dollar, and the proportion of black property

held as goods rose dramatically to eight cents per dollar of land. Freedpeople had so little in the way of household goods, clothing, farm tools, and so forth that part of this acquisition surely was demanded for simple subsistence. Freedpeople certainly did not continue to increase their store of goods; despite rising land and animal values, the value of goods stayed between eight and ten cents per land dollar through the 1880s and into the 1890s. These figures imply that black landowners may actually have been *less* well off in their material circumstances than their landless neighbors, given the willingness of landowners to sacrifice animals and movable goods to preserve their hold on their farms.

The 1890s brought the century's worst agricultural depression, aggravated by the national financial panic of 1893. When hard times hit, black landowners felt the jolt along with other poor farmers, and they responded by tightening their grip on the land. The impact of the panic on landowners is visible in the sudden contraction in the value of their taxable goods visible by 1894. Those who owned farms scrambled to keep them by selling off whatever they could spare. Some clearly sold off livestock, since the average value of stock on these farms dropped from twenty cents on the dollar in 1891 to fourteen cents in 1894. More people could spare their goods, though, than could spare their animals, and the relative value of movable goods plummeted from nearly ten cents to just over three cents. The number of farmers who owned no taxable goods of any kind rose steeply too, from 46 percent in 1891 to 64 percent by 1894.⁶³ They succeeded to some extent in protecting their lands though, since the median value of black-owned land stayed exactly the same through the hardest years of the agricultural depression.

It is evident from figure 4 that black farmers largely stayed in the economic doldrums through the end of the century. The worth of their farms, which had grown between 1881 and 1891, leveled off through the depression and began to fall in 1898. They did not recoup their losses in farm animals either, and their store of goods was never replenished. Though the number of black-owned farms continued to grow, and though the new owners generally furnished their farms with stock and some goods, new farmers were markedly less well-off on their farms than their predecessors in the 1880s had been.

Slow accumulation and the juggling of livestock and land were precarious enterprises. Inheritance, another important way of getting a farm, was no less so. Some families managed to bequeath land to successive generations, but for each person who inherited, several others found their family farms swallowed up in debt and death costs. Even very lucky heirs might find themselves with half or less of what the farm had once been worth.⁶⁴ The inability to endow heirs with the fruits of the family's accumulation not only hampered black communities as a whole from building on their gains but could also severely weaken familial bonds.

Dred Yarborough and his wife Lavinia, owners of a little $3\frac{3}{4}$ -acre farm in Fishing Creek township, suffered the latter misfortune. In the 1872 tax list, the Yarborough farm was worth forty dollars. In 1880 the farm supported Dred, Lavinia, and their two grandsons, Frank, age seventeen, and Thomas, age thirteen. Dred and Lavinia, seventy-six and seventy-five, respectively, no doubt depended upon the two young men to do the heavy labor that farming required. For their part, Frank and Thomas probably anticipated inheriting the farm in due time. But that was not to be. Taxes began to rise in the 1880s, and the assessed value of the Yarborough farm went from \$30 in 1886 to \$175 in 1888. The Yarboroughs did not have much to spare to meet this new tax burden. Besides their land, the Yarboroughs had only a few pigs and no taxable goods. They had not owned a cow since 1879. The family sold half an acre in 1888, presumably to pay the new taxes. In 1889, with the death of Dred Yarborough at age eighty-five, things went from bad to worse.

Lavinia inherited and held on to the farm, managing to pay her taxes in 1889 and 1890. She could do little else for the farm though, and its value began to fall. Assessment rates did not go down in these years, so the drop in taxable value from \$175 to \$82 reflects a change in real value. It may be that an acre prepared for tillage had been allowed to revert to the wild. Possibly a broken-down building, maybe a tobacco shed, had finally fallen in. Whatever the cause, not only was Lavinia losing value on her farm, but the farm also was losing its hold on her grandsons. In 1892 the tax assessor recorded that Thomas had moved to another township; Frank had left sometime before.

Lavinia herself died, alone perhaps, in 1893. Thomas returned to Fishing Creek and paid his poll tax there in 1894, but he had no land and no other property of value. Whatever his hopes had been when he left Fishing Creek, they had come to nothing, and now even his grandparents' farm was gone. Thomas stayed in the county for the rest of the century, never owning an acre, never owning a thing. In 1898 he reached a kind of nadir: even his poll tax payment was late.

The Yarboroughs could not keep their grandsons on the farm without offering them brighter prospects. Marcus Tilly, another Granville County black landowner, lost the inheritance accumulated for his family to agricultural debt. Tilly had spent most of the decade between 1865 and 1875 accumulating various contiguous pieces of property, incurring enormous debts in order to purchase, in all, 178 acres. His farm rested precariously on several instances of intricate debt and credit transfers and one long-term installment purchase. Tilly seems to have had patrons in a white couple, McKinsey P. Roberts and his wife, Rebecca. In 1869, the Robertses acted as transfer agents between Tilly and an absentee landlord named Gooch in the purchase of one 46-acre tract. Tilly survived the risks of accumulating his estate, however. He fell back from the high of 178 acres to a stable farm of only 165 acres, in part because he donated two acres on which to build a local church.

For all Tilly's connections, resilience, and ingenuity, though, he was unable to pass on much of his farm to his son. In 1885, Tilly was fifty-five years old. He mortgaged his farm, by then 165 acres, to the local merchandising house of Davis and Gregory for \$117. That money he used to plant a crop for the 1885 season. The note was due in March 1886, but by that time, Marcus Tilly was dead.⁶⁵ His sudden death left his estate unprotected. Tilly's son Hugh, the appointed executor, took over the management of his father's estate. More than 100 acres of Marcus Tilly's land disappeared almost immediately, presumably taken to meet his obligations to Davis and Gregory. In 1887, one year after his father's death, Hugh Tilly had only 57 acres to administer. On January 30, 1888, Hugh lost a suit for debt brought against the estate by Robert W. Booth. The loss cost the estate \$89.93, including court costs, a judgment that wiped

out the rest of Marcus Tilly's farm.⁶⁶ The tax assessor in 1888 found Hugh Tilly landless, and rather poorer for his executorial duties, having lost about \$100 worth of his own personal property besides.

In 1891, twenty-nine-year-old Hugh Tilly paid taxes on a good horse, a cow, and a few pots and pans, then left the county. But three years later he was back, and he began the slow process of accumulation all over again. In 1894 he owned one acre, two pigs, a cow, and some tools. By 1896 Hugh had added a horse, a mule, and another cow. His single acre was now a "town lot" and, as such, was worth \$50 more than he had paid for it. In 1897 he sold the lot and bought a farm of fifty-one acres, which, judging by the brief description, may have once been part of his father's farm. Hugh paid \$350 for the tract.⁶⁷

The Yarborough and Tilly estates were ravaged by the costs of inheritance, of debt combined with death. Despite the obvious divergences of wealth and position, the Yarborough and Tilly stories share some other crucial elements. Both farms were stable in size when the troubles began. Though black landowners seem to have preferred stability to the risks of accumulation, stability by itself was no protection. Farms could just as readily be engulfed by misfortune or miscalculation as by entrepreneurial behavior. The death of the owner made all debts payable at once, a demand few marginal farming families could absorb without loss. Many who were raised on farms their families owned found themselves suddenly disinherited, landless, and starting over.

It is also significant that neither Lavinia Yarborough nor Hugh Tilly had a strong household economy to fall back on when the crisis came. Lavinia Yarborough was too poor and too old to sustain household production of a substantial sort, and her grandsons, who might have contributed, deserted the farm. Marcus Tilly was widowed when he contracted the debt that ultimately swallowed up the farm, and his son Hugh was unmarried when he inherited. Hugh had married by the time he purchased his own acreage in 1897. Interestingly, Hugh and his wife, Dema, despite contracting several mortgages on their land, kept it and worked it at least until Hugh's death in 1921. In his will he bequeathed the farm to Dema, and after her to their children Julia, Pauline, and Theodore.⁶⁸

The absence of productive households may have helped to doom the Yarborough and Tilly farms, but there is no way definitively to sort out the impact of the lack of home production from that of a dozen other factors that might have contributed to the losses. The story of another family, though, provides a suggestive contrast to the Yarborough and Tilly troubles, revealing ways landowning families might have skirted the dangers of probate procedures. The Atkins family of Brassfield township, headed by widowed Ann Atkins, was in fact able to bequeath sizable acreage to a second generation, despite suffering some of the same hardships as the Tillys and the Yarboroughs.

The Atkinses' greater success probably reflected several advantages the Atkins family had, including a stronger household economy. Ann Atkins was widowed younger than Lavinia Yarborough, and unlike both Yarborough and Hugh Tilly, Ann Atkins had a large family to help on the farm. She also had more acreage and more livestock to start with than Lavinia Yarborough had had. When Ann Atkins was widowed in the mid-1870s, her three older sons, Robert, James, and George, were teenagers and her two daughters, Mary and Martha, were young children. Six-year-old Benjamin completed the family. The tax lists provide no clue as to how she had come to own the 160-acre farm for which she was taxed in 1877. But it was a good farm. She had 45 acres under cultivation, 108 acres of wooded land, and another 10 acres in which to pasture her livestock. She owned two horses, old ones probably, since they were worth only about twenty dollars each. She had six cows, worth thirty dollars, a value that suggests that some were mature milk-producers. Ann Atkins also raised a pen of pigs. The tax lists do not enumerate chickens, but in 1879 the federal census taker noted sixteen fowl on the Atkins farm. So with sons old enough to plow, daughters old enough to tend the livestock and gather wood, and enough land to support them all, the Atkins family was in a very good position to prosper.⁶⁹

The farm provided well for the family. As owners, they had some discretion in what they grew, and they grew mostly food crops. They raised both corn and wheat, several bushels each of peas and beans, both Irish and sweet potatoes, and sorghum for molasses. They had apple trees that produced abundantly and a few acres of oats, probably mostly

for livestock feed. The well-fed cows produced milk rich enough to make butter, though the Atkins family made no cheese. They gathered most of their wood from their own woodlot. Some land was left fallow, and on a few leftover acres they grew about seven hundred pounds of tobacco. Their crop mix suggests that they ate rather well, mixing eggs, pork, chicken, and beef with grains, potatoes, beans, peas, and fruit. They certainly worked hard and would have benefited from a balanced diet.

The family probably purchased little from the local store. They owned almost fifty dollars' worth of farm tools, probably including a plow, several hoes, and a wagon. In the 1879 crop season they paid only one dollar for commercial fertilizer. Most likely their own livestock provided the rest. They could have taken any tobacco they consumed from their own small crop, they had sorghum for sweetening, and they had the raw materials to make their own soap. Some clothing, winter shoes, liquor, medicine, the occasional luxury, and maybe a festive bag of oranges at Christmas probably completed the family shopping list.⁷⁰

Ann and the children worked hard, managed the farm carefully, and saw its value grow. There is evidence, though, that they found the taxes on the farm increasingly onerous and hard to meet. Assessment rose twice all over the county in the 1880s. Between 1877 and 1891, the Atkins farm rose in assessed value from six hundred to one thousand dollars. The farm may have increased in real value; they added three acres, and over those years they may have cleared some of the woodland acreage and prepared it for cultivation. Whatever the mix of causes, their taxes rose and began to bite into the family's store of goods and animals.

In 1891, holding 163 acres, worth one thousand dollars, Ann Atkins had only one old horse, worth fifteen dollars, two of her original six cows, and three of six pigs left in her pen. Fifty dollars of farm tools had become fifteen, suggesting the loss perhaps of a wagon and a spare plow. There were other signs of hardship. Two of Ann's sons disappeared during these years, though whether they died or just left the county is unclear. Her youngest, Benjamin, along with brother Robert and sister Martha, had been sick the day the census taker visited in 1879. Robert and Martha survived to inherit, but Benjamin may have died. Neither

Benjamin nor his brother George appear to have inherited a share of the farm. Despite loss and diminished reserves, though, in 1891 the Atkinses were better off than many of their neighbors. Their home was well furnished, they had ten dollars in cash, and they were creditors to a neighbor for another twenty dollars.

That year, Ann Atkins decided to apportion her farm among her children. She did not record her reasons for doing so. It was not uncommon for children to be settled on acreage to which they would ultimately inherit clear title, though it was unusual to deed parcels of the family farm to children before the death of the elders.⁷¹

Ann may have had several compelling reasons. Her surviving sons, Robert and James, were thirty-three and thirty-one years old, respectively. They had been working for her and living in her household for all the years of their adulthood. Robert was married with a young son. James most likely was married as well. In any case, they had certainly reached an age where they would desire acreage and homes for themselves. In addition, Ann's daughters had reached marriageable age. Mary was twenty-three and Martha twenty-one. Owning farms would significantly improve their chances of making advantageous marriages. Ann herself was past fifty, and might have sought some rest for herself in giving over the bulk of the responsibility for the farm to her children.

She did not divide her land with an eye toward strict equity. Nor do her bequests reflect a preference for sons over daughters, or older children over younger. Robert, her oldest son, received 16¼ acres; Mary, the older daughter, received 17; Martha was given 30 acres; and James received 22. The disproportion may reflect the mix of tillable acreage, woodland, and pasture in each allotment. It may also reflect the mother's judgment about her children's abilities and prospects. James, though the younger of the two brothers, got more land from his mother. He also got her horse and one of her two cows. If her generosity reflected a special confidence in James, he more than justified it, doubling his acreage in only six years and increasing his stock in number and value. In the same six years, Robert lost a quarter of an acre, as well as gaining, then losing, a horse, a cow, and some pigs. Ann may also have expected James to continue to live with her and help on her farm.

She kept 50 acres for herself, all her pigs, and one of two cows. She never acquired another draft animal, suggesting that James now plowed her acreage with the horse she had bequeathed him.

Ann also succeeded in aiding her daughters. Within two years both young women were married. In a wedding held at her mother's home in 1893, Mary married John Eaton; the following year Martha married Richard Taylor. Mary Atkins Eaton and Martha Atkins Taylor settled on their farms, near their mother and brothers, and raised families of their own.⁷² Whatever the formal inequities of the arrangement, Ann Atkins settled her family as well as she could, preserving her substantial estate, giving land to sons and daughters alike, and assuring her own future by enabling her children to settle close by.⁷³ By transferring her estate at the time of her own choosing she got the greatest advantage from it, and avoided the dangers of the sudden reckoning that would inevitably have accompanied her death.

Ann Atkins chose to demonstrate particular confidence in two of her four children, and they did not disappoint her. Her behavior was not unusual. Careful discrimination among potential heirs marked most of the few traceable bequests, both in Granville County and elsewhere. Vina Ross, a Granville County farmer, seems to have made choices that echo those of Ann Atkins. Vina's husband, Madison, left the farm to her when he died in 1885. When she died six years later, she left the whole farm to their daughter, Laura, even though a son, Eddie, also lived in the township. Eddie, left landless, had left the county by 1894 and did not return. Beverly White, a landowner in the freedpeople's community of Promised Land, South Carolina, divided his farm between two of his four sons. The other two had migrated from the community, and White left them only one dollar each. The small bequest may have been a mark of his displeasure at their migration. It is more likely, though, that he wished to honor their claims without seriously diminishing the already small inheritance he had to leave.⁷⁴

Land scarcity virtually dictated favoritism of this sort. Sometimes potential heirs left home in search of better chances elsewhere, foreseeing inheritance of only a tiny farm as their share of the family holdings. Elders would then, quite reasonably, devise the farm on heirs who were

still in the community. In other and perhaps more painful cases, elders had to evaluate the abilities of several potential heirs who had stayed nearby. As longtime landowners who knew intimately the ceaseless struggle required to keep a black family farm intact, these testators can hardly be blamed for giving preference in their bequests to their most able and reliable heirs.

Here then, are the major vehicles through which freedpeople became landowners. A handful benefited, briefly, from the passing moment of national commitment to the needs of the freed slaves. Others garnered land through the vagaries of state politics, and a few others through the patronage of individual whites. Some got their land as an inheritance. Many more gained their land after years of unrelenting effort and gradual accumulation.

The vigorous effort and strain involved in getting and keeping a farm made black landowning, for better and for worse, a particular kind of communal event; though land was held privately, the fact of black landholding had significant impacts on the whole community, black and white. Slavery offers an interesting analogue; the many slaves who did not run away nevertheless felt the power and the importance of the few who did. The new North Star—farm ownership—had some of the same romance, only better. For landless blacks, black landowners provided models and exemplars, but models unlike the few “leading colored men” who moved on the national scene. Local black landowners were neighbors, people no more fortunate, necessarily, than anyone else, no better linked into patronage networks, no more sheltered from harassment than any of their landless friends. The landless people saw that farm ownership was modest enough to be available in principle to anyone. Those who achieved it represented the aspirations of many others who tried.

The grim side of this communal identity was, of course, that the opportunities available to black farmers were also sharply limited by the rules of racial caste. The ambitions of the whole community, like those of individuals, however well motivated, however ingenious, however tenacious, could not challenge white supremacy, or even seem to undercut it, without provoking reprisals. Land acquisition was not a private

Table 3
Size of Owned and Rented Portions of Dual-Tenure Farms,
Granville County, North Carolina, 1879–1880

	Total farm N = 36	Owned portion N = 26 *	Rented portion ** N = 26 *
Average acreage	38	18	22
Median acreage	26	9	20
% 10 acres or less	16	58	31
% 11–49 acres	58	27	61
% 50 acres and more	25	15	8

* Ten farms provided only total acreage, not divided into owned and rented portions.

** This category includes property rented for cash and property rented for a share of the crop.

Source: Compiled from Tax Lists, Granville County, NC, 1879, and from United States Bureau of the Census, 10th Census of the Population, 1880, Schedule of Agriculture, Granville County, NC.

matter; it had public consequences in the hopes and dreams of landless blacks and in the fears and furies of threatened whites.

The public dimension of land acquisition combined with the very limited financial resources of most freedpeople to create a particular landowning strategy that could keep to a minimum both the social and financial risks of farm ownership. A number of black farmers practiced “dual tenure,” holding two farms under two different tenure arrangements at the same time. In practice, dual tenure or double-farming families were families who owned a small farm and also rented or share-cropped another larger tract. A double-farming family might farm a total of, say, 20 acres, owning 2 acres and renting 18.⁷⁵

The phenomenon appeared all over Granville County, on large farms as well as small ones. Lottie and Henry Grandy, the couple discussed earlier who spent years accumulating and protecting their 9-acre farm, were at one point both owners and sharecroppers. Robert and Ellen Norwood used dual tenure to salvage their 6-acre farm when it was threatened by debt. Lawson and Sarah Hart of Brassfield planted 8 acres, some of which they owned and some of which they rented. Alex and Emiline Brooks presided over a double-farm of 50 acres in Brassfield. Archibald and Sarah Kearsey cultivated two farms: 15 acres in Oxford township, which they owned, and 29 rented acres just over the township

line in Fishing Creek. Robert and Mary Ragland owned 80 acres and sharecropped another 127 in Oxford township.

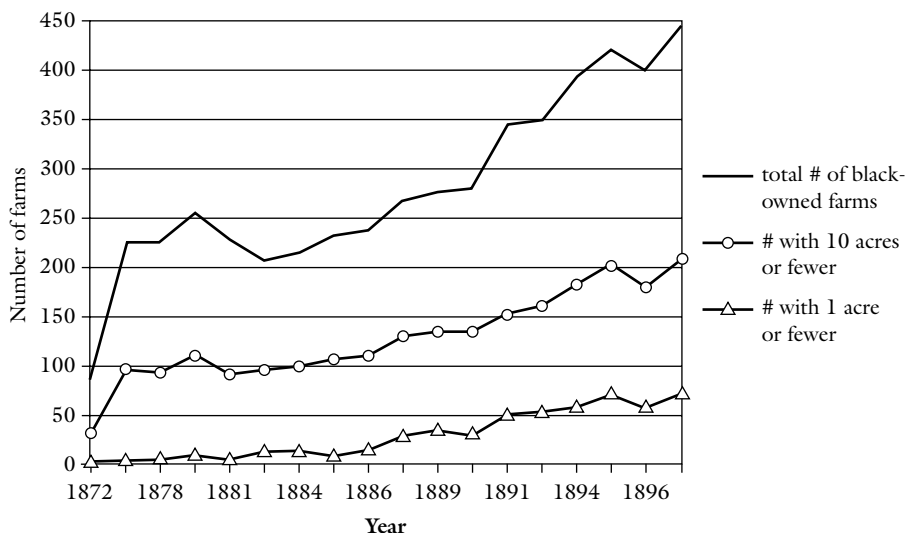
Table 3 offers some detail on the size distribution of Granville County's dual tenure farms. The rented acreage on double-farms was measurably larger than the owned acreage, particularly for the smallest farms. Average acreage owned was 18; average acreage rented was 22. The medians of owned and rented land are 9 and 20 acres, respectively. The table also makes clear that the majority of double-farmers owned 10 or fewer acres and used dual tenure to increase the size of their overall farming enterprise to between 11 and 50 acres.

It is, unhappily, nearly impossible to know the full extent of dual tenure practiced in Granville County in these years. The agricultural census, as noted above, largely ignored a family's "secondary," smaller acreage. The enumerator of Brassfield township did trouble to note the existence of double-farms, but he was the only one, and we cannot know how systematically he recorded what he found. In townships enumerated without explicit acknowledgment of doublers, the evidence of dual tenure farming is even harder to tease out.

Comparing tax records with the agricultural census will identify some farmers with two farms. The 1880 agricultural census reported acreage planted and farm production for 1879. Where the census denotes tenancy and the 1879 tax list documents ownership, dual tenure can be presumed. Another clue to dual tenure lies in discrepancies between the number of acres a family plants and the number of acres it controls. A household that rented only 12 acres but planted 22 acres was probably practicing some kind of dual tenure.

Discrepancy in acreage is by no means an infallible index to double-farms, but enumerators left a further clue that helps to confirm the suspicion of dual tenure. Enumerators were asked to note both the acreage and the value of a farm. In dual tenure situations, the enumerator counted the two types of acreage together, listing one farm of 25 acres, for example, instead of two farms, one of 3 acres and one of 22. Grouping the acreage together made it almost impossible to assign an accurate value to the farm. For tenant farms, "value" was the amount paid for rent, either in cash or in crop. For owners, "value" was the estimated

Figure 5
Growth in the Number of Black-Owned Farms by Farm Size and Year,
Granville County, North Carolina, 1872–1898



Source: Compiled from Tax Lists, Granville County, NC, 1872–1898. Originals at the State Library, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC.

market price of the farm. The two measures are quite incompatible, and so wherever they encountered a double-farm, enumerators generally left a blank in the category of farm value. That blank, together with a sharp discrepancy in acreage, is a good indicator of the presence of a dual tenure farm.

All techniques for tracking dual tenure farms depend upon the agricultural census records, and thus partake of the various weaknesses of the census. Dependence upon the census, moreover, makes it impossible to find doublers at any time other than a census year, severely limiting our ability to assess the frequency and importance of double-farming.

Two muted clues exist that suggest that double-farming may have been widespread. Many freedpeople owned very small farms. Farmers who chose to double-farm usually owned only a few acres, and a one-

acre farm virtually required dual tenure. Therefore, the percentage of one-acre farms in each year provides a very rough guide to the number of Granville County black farmers who might have chosen dual tenure (see figure 5).

Moreover, neighborhood structure would have supported dual tenure, because farm tenants and farm owners lived side by side. Details of neighborhood structure can be drawn from recorded crop liens, which specify the land on which the mortgaged crop is to be grown, usually by naming the tenants of neighboring land. These records document extensive residential mixing of owners and tenants in both the towns and the county at large. For example, Peter Charleston, a freedman of Oxford town, had two neighbors: on one side, B. H. Cozart, sometime sheriff of the county, and on the other, John Littlejohn, who, like Charleston, was a smallholding freedman. Hawkins Curtis's farm of 20 acres adjoined land owned by B. F. Hester, another county sheriff, and Junius Mangum, freedman and owner of 10 acres. Wesley Burt's five acres adjoined the lands of Robert Hunt and B. R. Knott. Robert Hunt was another longtime black landowner. Knott was a white man who owned a great deal of property in the county. It is certainly possible that Cozart, Hester, and Knott themselves lived on the land that adjoined the black smallholders. Given that all three white men were prominent and wealthy citizens, though, it is more likely that they lived in more elegant places elsewhere and rented the land they owned to others to work. Those who rented may have been of either race; the point is that they did not own the land they worked *and* that they lived right next to people who did.

The mix of owner-operated farms with tenant farms would have helped to make double-farming manageable and remunerative. Living next door to one's rented acreage made it much easier to tend to two farms at once. Using their own draft animal, for example, enabled tenant families to claim a larger share of the harvest from a rented farm, and proximity meant that the farmer would not have had to drive the family mule many miles between farms. Fertilizer collected on the family farm could be readily transported the short distance to the rented farm. Location was most likely not fully a matter of choice for freedpeople;

there were undoubtedly parts of the town and county where they were not welcome to live. Insofar as they did choose where to live, however, mingling owner-operated farms with tenant farms served important needs. The ease of mingling, together with the large number of very small farms, suggests that a great many freedpeople may have tried their hand at double-farming. For 1879, in any case, a conservative appraisal identified thirty-six Granville County farmers as double-farmers. That number must be treated as a bare minimum. There is every reason to suspect that many more double-farms existed in 1879 than could be found, and that still more cases occurred in noncensus years.

Double-farming helped landowning freedpeople manage not only the social dangers of farm ownership but also the financial difficulties land ownership often brought. In Granville County, as all around the South, the economic advantages of small farm ownership per se were scant, and its burdens heavy. Owning land meant shouldering the additional costs of maintaining a draft animal and of paying land taxes. Ownership invited hostility and harassment. Ownership did not relieve a farmer of the burdens imposed by the credit system. On the contrary, financing livestock and taxes may have forced landowning freedpeople to borrow more often than their tenant counterparts, when their tiny farms could not generate enough surplus to meet these additional costs. The only financial advantage that accrued to owners seems to have been the opportunity to grow more food crop and less cash crop, though even this advantage could be compromised by debt.

With the drawbacks of land ownership so palpable, it is difficult to explain the persistence of freedpeople's ambition to own. The passion of the former slaves to own farms has generally been attributed to freedpeople's dissatisfaction with tenancy and debt, coupled with their refusal to accept that the national government would not come to their aid. No doubt these attitudes existed. But dual farming represents another explanation, because it was an intermediate form of ownership, a type of tenure that partook of advantages available to owners as well as those available to renters. Double-farming, in other words, could partially resolve the dilemma created when the disadvantages of land ownership collided with the desire for farms.

Black farm owners could use dual tenure to meet a number of their needs. Enoch and Rosa Arrington of Fishing Creek township employed dual tenure to enlarge their farm from just under 2 acres to 4 acres. In 1879 they owned $1\frac{3}{4}$ acres. They cultivated 4 acres that year and had the use of another 8 acres of wooded grazing land. By 1881 the Arringtons owned all 4 acres of tillage, though none of the woodlot. Most likely, their original tiny “farm” lay in the midst of their rented acreage. They had probably built a home on the small lot and cultivated the 4-acre farm for several years under a combination of tenure types. Enoch and Rosa prospered sufficiently under that system to purchase the whole farm by 1881. They most likely also used the woodlot as grazing land for their horse, cow, and seven pigs.⁷⁶

William and Elizabeth Cousins, neighbors of the Arringtons, may have also acquired their small farm through dual tenure. They owned 2 acres in 1879, and the census lists them as sharecroppers on another farm of the same size. The census records that they planted 2 acres of tobacco.⁷⁷ The Cousinses probably planted their rented acreage in cash crop and their own tract in food crops. William and Elizabeth were rather old, fifty-five and sixty, respectively. Even with help from two sons who lived with them, Richard, age ten, and Oscar, age sixteen, four acres may have been all that they could reasonably expect to cultivate.

Benjamin Ridley used dual tenure to procure the use of a horse. In 1879, Ridley sharecropped 11 acres in Fishing Creek, even though he owned a 5-acre farm. Rather than support a horse on the meager earnings his small acreage could produce, he contracted as a cropper and got the use of a horse in the bargain.⁷⁸ Like Ridley, Charles and Winnie Tally of Oxford township may have used dual tenure to compensate for their lack of farm animals. Double-farming also helped the Tallys weather the years of rising tax bills for their 2-acre farm. Charles rented 5 acres, and Winnie owned the 2-acre tract, which probably also held their home. The assessment on the homeplace doubled in 1879, from twenty-five to fifty dollars. Paying the tax bill probably required the sale of Winnie’s cow; Charles also lost a cow and 3 pigs between the tax assessment of 1879 and the federal census enumeration of 1880. From 1881 until the tax lists end in 1898, Winnie Tally acquired and lost one or perhaps two

cows. She never owned a horse or a mule. There is no way to confirm the contention that the Tallys double-farmed through this period, but they were definitely double-farming in 1880, and may have continued to do so, saving the expense of a draft animal and maintaining the ability to grow enough to pay rising taxes on their own small tract.⁷⁹

For James and Dina Harris of Tally Ho township, dual tenure provided a chance to make good use of all the labor available in their household. James and Dina were fifty-four and fifty-three years old, respectively, in 1880, and that year they sharecropped 11 acres, in addition to the 1½-acre tract that they owned. Two daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah, ages eighteen and seven, and one son, Sherman, age fifteen, lived with their parents. In addition, the Harrises housed James's eighty-year-old mother, Frankie, and an unrelated boarder named Ned Allen. Ned Allen and Sherman and Elizabeth Harris all worked on the farm, while Frankie, Dina, and Sarah all probably looked after the housekeeping. One and one-half acres could not possibly have absorbed much of the time of this large group of workers; with an extra eleven acres the family could take advantage of one of its great assets, a ready pool of adult labor, to increase its income.⁸⁰

Like the stories of the Norwoods and the Grandys, the life of one double-farming family, headed by John and Isabella Allen, helps illustrate in detail the possibilities intrinsic to managing two farms simultaneously. John and Isabella Allen lived in Brassfield township with their family of six children. The Brassfield enumerator revealed their status as double-farmers by accidentally counting the Allen family twice, once on an owned farm of fifty acres, and again on a sharecropped farm of thirty acres.⁸¹ The Allen farm is large relative to other dual tenure farms, and therefore presented some options not available on smaller farms. Because of the enumerator's error, though, the Allens' experiences with double-farming are unusually richly documented. Close inspection of the two enumerations provides a host of important insights into the motives and advantages involved in dual tenure, even on smaller farms.

John and Isabella Allen had owned their farm for some time before 1880. They had one teenage son, James, and younger children Mary,

William, Robert, Luther, and Caroline. Luther and Caroline, ages four and two, respectively, were the only ones too young to help on the farm. This may have been a second marriage for John, since at approximately fifty years old he was at least twenty years older than his wife.⁸²

Simply as owners, the Allens had significant resources. Their farm of 50 acres was valued at \$1,000. Twenty dollars an acre was double the ordinary cost of land, suggesting that the Allens owned land as fertile as could be found anywhere in the state. They had a reasonable store of livestock, one mule and one milk cow, with one calf to keep and one to slaughter. Isabella looked after five pigs, though she kept no chickens. Production on this promising farm, though, was surprisingly low, only \$250 worth of produce, minus \$45 paid for fertilizer. For land worth \$20 an acre, the Allen farm required much more fertilizer than one might expect. It may be that the land was actually poorer than the farm value suggests, or that it was very unsuitable for growing cotton. The land value may simply have been inflated, or it might have reflected location, the condition of buildings, or other factors unrelated to land fertility. In any case, 15 acres of corn, even with fertilizer, produced only 100 bushels, 8 acres of wheat brought a harvest of 22 bushels, and 12 acres of cotton yielded only 4 bales.⁸³ Isabella's garden produced 11 bushels of sweet potatoes, which, with corn, pork, and beef, probably made up the bulk of the diet of this family of eight.

Their rented land, though, added considerably to their production. As owners, the Allens had access to no farm machinery at all; their tenancy brought them \$25 worth of machinery. That surely included a good plow, and perhaps a wagon and harness as well. A plow would have significantly eased the rigors of cultivating such a large farm, and a wagon would have helped both with the harvest and with carrying the produce to market. The rented farm also gave them access to a wood lot, from which they harvested 10 cords of wood, presumably much needed to heat their home and cook their meals. The rented farm provided no additional livestock, but the Allens had little need of more livestock.

The sharecropped farm also produced better than the Allens' own

land. Fourteen acres of corn on the tenant farm produced more bushels, 127, than 15 of their own acres. Wheat was about the same, 8 acres for 20 bushels. In cotton the tenant farm was triumphant, producing the same amount, 4 bales, from only 6 acres, half the number the Allens had cultivated on their own land.

The advantages of dual tenure to Isabella and John Allen were fairly straightforward. As with the Harris family, double-farming provided greater overall productivity, helping them make full use of their household resources. They needed a productive farm because they had a large family of fairly young children to support. Most of the children were old enough to do some farm work, though they still probably consumed more than their young strength could produce. Chopping cotton and gathering wood were activities that children between ages eight and fourteen might be expected to do. Access to the woodlot provided John and Isabella with both wood for the fire and work that their children could do. By providing their own animals, the Allens probably secured a half-share or better of the produce on the tenant farm, thus supplementing their stores of corn, wheat, and potatoes, and giving them cash income from two cotton crops instead of just one. Combining their own acreage with a tenant farm allowed John and Isabella Allen not only to feed their family but to employ it fully for everyone's benefit.

One further advantage came to the Allens through their oldest child, James. The first enumeration, of the family's own farm, found James "work[ing] on [the] farm." According to the enumeration of the rented farm, though, James was "at school." The enumerations were probably separated by a day or two, suggesting that James attended school whenever he could. It is noteworthy that John and Isabella chose to apply their oldest child's labor only part-time, and on the family farm, rather than full-time on both farms. One of the advantages of their relative prosperity may have been that they could spare James to acquire some schooling.

All things considered, the Allen family did rather well. There is, of course, no way to know, but the Allens may have continued under dual tenure until at least James, Mary, and William, the three oldest children, were old enough to labor as adults on the farm. At that point, the

Allen family might have turned to more intensive cultivation of its own acreage.

These stories highlight the advantages of dual tenure over simple ownership. Double-farming gave the Arringtons and the Cousinses a way to expand their acreage. For the Tallys, planting a larger farm than they owned provided a margin to meet the taxes on their own land. Rented acreage made up the difference for the Harrises and the Allens between the amount of land they owned and the amount of land they desired to work. Furthermore, Benjamin Ridley, the Tallys, and the Allens all secured necessary farm equipment under their rental agreements.

Two farms also could produce two crops. The Allens sowed both farms in cash and food crops, but this was only one way of proceeding. Robert and Ellen Norwood planted their two farms differently, the rented farm in cash crops and their own farm in food. They hoped thereby to escape their growing burden of debt. By planting the rented farm in cash crops and the owned one in food crops, a family like the Norwoods might hope to meet its debts and have a balance left over. Adequate food crops would eliminate the necessity of buying food from the local store. Keeping the store account low would allow the family to clear a bit from its share of the cash crop grown on the rented land. With luck, a family might have the prospect of starting the next planting year, if not entirely on its own, at least from a relatively strong position. In the Norwoods' case, dual tenure provided a way to rebuild their fortunes and restabilize their small farm.

Dual tenure might also have provided black farm owners with a certain degree of protection. Freedpeople in general took care not to flaunt their landowning, and a rental contract allowed them to blend in with their landless neighbors. The near silence of the federal census on the subject of double-farms testifies indirectly to the success of that stragem. Angry attacks, if they were mounted, might also on occasion be deflected by the active involvement of a white landlord protecting his own interest in his tenants.

What the household economy was to the entire economic enterprise of the freedpeople, then, dual tenure was to the business of owning a

Table 4
Farm Equipment and Planting Patterns by Farm Tenure and Farm Size,
Granville County, North Carolina, 1879–1880

Tenure type (cases)	Share (N = 48)	Rent (N = 16)	Own (N = 28)	Dual (N = 36)
Avg. # of animals (draft + cows) per household	2.5	2.75	2.70	2.08
% of farm planted	82.5	70	69	62
# with all available acreage planted	22 (46%)	3 (19%)	4 (14%)	6* (24%)
% of planted acreage in food crops	80	81	85.5	73
# with <u>all</u> planted acres in food crops	6 (12.5%)	1 (6%)	10 (36%)	3 (8%)
% of planted acreage in food crops				
on farms <21 acres	90.4 (N = 16)	76.5 (N = 9)	90.3 (N = 19)	67.4 (N = 16)
on farms 21–49 acres	81.4 (N = 27)	86.9 (N = 7)	87.8 (N = 5)	68.9 (N = 16)
on farms >49 acres	53 (N = 3)	96 (N = 1)	67 (N = 5)	85 (N = 5)

*These figures do not include 11 farms in Fishing Creek township. Double-farmers in Fishing Creek were identified by the fact that farmers planted more acreage than they rented, thus nominally all such farms had 100 percent of their acreage in crops. This is artificially high, and the average without the Fishing Creek farms more accurately reflects the behavior of double-farmers throughout the county.

Source: Compiled from the Census of Agriculture, 1880, for Granville County, NC.

farm. Double-farming provided flexibility to landowners, helping them to meet the crises of acquisition, the costs of maintenance, and the threat of loss. Dual tenure also helped families adapt to changes in available household labor, allowing farm size to expand and contract in response to the labor a family could muster. Like the household economy, dual tenure proved its value at the margin, giving freedpeople latitude and methods with which to adjust to the exigencies of postbellum life.

Dual tenure farms hold a unique place in the hierarchy of farm tenure types. As the figures in table 4 suggest, double-farmers behaved like owners in keeping only a limited portion of their acreage under cultivation (62 percent), but more like renters in the number who grew nothing but food (8 percent), and more like sharecroppers in the amount of

livestock they maintained (2.08 draft animals per household). Double-farmers behaved like farmers in other categories because doublers faced precisely the situations that controlled the farming priorities of other tenure categories.⁸⁴

Like owners, for example, double-farmers might hold acreage fallow, preserving the fertility of their own land while farming intensively on the rented acreage. Or, because the owned portions of dual tenure farms were often small, double-farmers might use their few acres as a home-place, never planting it in marketable crops. Either strategy would leave double-farmers with less of their available acreage in crops than croppers or renters, who did not have the options accruing to ownership.

Like sharecroppers, though, double-farmers kept very few large farm animals. The scarcity of stock on cropping farms probably reflected croppers' overall poverty. Doublers kept few animals of their own because they could gain access to large livestock through their rental agreements.

But, like renters, double-farmers placed a high priority on growing cash crops. All types of farmers cultivated most of their acreage in food, but owners and sharecroppers with little acreage planted almost all of their farmland in food crops (90.3 percent and 90.4 percent, respectively), increasing the proportion in cash crop as the farms grew. Doublers and renters, by contrast, planted more cash crop on smaller farms, increasing food production as farms expanded.

The pressures of creditors might explain the tendency of renters to plant heavily in cash crop. But the similarity in planting priorities that links owners with sharecroppers and renters with double-farmers implies that other imperatives than credit may also have been at work in shaping planting decisions. Owners and sharecroppers, in many ways the least alike in their economic position, shared one important characteristic. Both were fairly stable in their tenure category, though for different reasons. Sharecroppers, thanks to poverty and relative youth, were not able to muster the resources to move into cash renting or ownership. Owners, having acquired their farms, declined to expand in order to avoid the risk of losing everything. The tendency to plant food

Table 5
Household Structure by Farm Tenure Type,
Granville County, North Carolina, 1879-1880

Tenure type (cases)	Share (N = 48)	Rent (N = 16)	Own (N = 28)	Dual (N = 36)
Average household size (members)	6.29	6.81	6.64	6.60
Average household age *	38.7	42.6	45.5	41.3
Average age of children ** (yrs.)	6.8	7.2	7.5	7.3
Ratio of workers *** to members in household	.71	.79	.79	.66

* This is the average of the ages of the male and female household heads.

** For this category, "children" are defined as those age 15 and younger. Fifteen was selected rather than the census standard, age 10, because the point of the table is to examine surplus productivity. While a child might be gainfully or usefully employed at age 10, indeed even at age 6, he/she would probably not produce surplus over and above the cost of his/her keep until closer to adult strength, estimated at around 15.

*** Those considered workers for this analysis included all household members aged 10 years and over.

Source: Compiled from the 10th Census of Population, 1880, and Tax Lists, 1879 and 1880, for Granville County, NC.

crops first could signal the common commitment to stability of sharecroppers and owners. If so, then the desire of renters and double-farmers to plant cash crops may indicate a commitment to economic mobility.

Patterns of household structure help illuminate the goals that guided renters and double-farmers in their planting. Table 5 outlines some aspects of the household structure of families in each tenure category. As might be expected, sharecropping families were younger than renters, and renters in turn younger than owners. Double-farm families were essentially parallel to renters in age structure. The most striking feature of the table is that, while average household size is about the same for renters and for double-farmers, dual tenure families supported many more dependents than families in any other tenure category, including renters. The ratio of workers to household members, .71, .79, and .79, for sharecroppers, renters, and owners, respectively, falls to .66 on double-farms.

The burden of dependency was not simply a phenomenon of age. Par-

ents on double-farms were parallel in age to renting parents (41.3 years and 42.6 years, respectively) and the average age of children on the two types of farms (7.2 years and 7.3 years) was almost identical.⁸⁵ The crucial difference is that renting households more often included adults in non-nuclear relationships to the household heads, while dual tenure households overwhelmingly sheltered simple (though large) nuclear family units.

Only 44 percent of renters lived in simple nuclear family units, while fully 79 percent of double-farmers had such households. William and Henrietta Montague, for example, who rented in Dutchville township, welcomed Henrietta's thirty-year-old brother, Edward, into their home. Elisha and Mary Woody lived with Squire Woody, Elisha's older brother, on a rented farm in Henderson township. The household of Richard and Easter Forsyth included Easter's adult children, as well as another twenty-one-year-old woman who worked on the farm. Woodson and Salina Hart, renting in Oxford township, had virtually nothing but adult boarders and the boarders' teenage children in the household.⁸⁶ Among double-farmers, very few constructed such households. Even in homes with young children or ill adults, situations that would almost naturally call for supplementing the number of adults in the household, double-farmers tended to maintain simple nuclear family units.⁸⁷ The "extra" adults in renting households may well have been related in some way to the families with whom they resided. The point here is not to argue that one type of household was "familial" and the other not. The point is that the households of renting families showed signs of a purposeful increase in the number of laboring members.

For renters, this household structure was linked directly to planting priorities. The "artificial" increase in adult laborers, combined with the commitment to cash crops, tends to confirm the sense that cash renters were more actively in quest of farm ownership than farmers of any other tenure-type. Renting families gathered in as much adult labor as they could, planted as much of their land as they could in cash crops, and tried to save enough to buy a farm. Double-farmers may have planted cash crop for the same reason that renters did—they wanted

the money—though their reasons for wanting cash probably varied. Double-farmers might have sought cash to purchase additional land, to pay credit obligations, or to pay taxes. The household structure of dual tenure families does not indicate the same kind of purposeful increase in adult labor present in renting homes, but there is no reason it should. Double-farmers were not in pursuit of farm ownership. Their household structure reflected their status as owners, able to support more dependents, seeking flexibility to meet whatever present obligations presented themselves, and able to plan for the longer-term growth of their families.

The various “rungs” of the agricultural ladder seem to have been, for freedpeople, rather more intertwined than sequential. Instead of moving from laborer to cropper to cash tenant to owner, families of freedpeople chose at each juncture whether to invest in mobility or stability. If the household’s resources demanded stability, then either owning or cropping could provide it by allowing a family to plant heavily in food crops to meet immediate needs. If the household economy was strong enough to support making a run at a better life, then cash rental or dual-tenure farming offered the strategic advantages of growing as much cash crop as possible. The two farm systems neatly outline the imperatives of the two major activities—preserving their position and securing farm ownership—that structured the lives of black farmers. The household economy played a central part in both stabilizing and advancing the fortunes of black farm families. Without the flexibility and resilience built into a strong household economy, farm ownership would have been an impossible dream.

But even farm ownership was as much a means to a greater goal as it was an end in itself. Gains made by individuals or families could not have their fullest meaning without the contexts and opportunities incarnate in community institutions. What good was it to have land enough to keep your children out of plantation work gangs if there was no school to which to send them? What did reading or writing mean without a setting wherein those skills could do some good? Where would the talented and eager youth go, if there were no churches where they could shine? No one could be raised up very far unless the whole community

rose; the community would not rise without a fabric of nurturing institutions. At emancipation, therefore, freedpeople took up the task of building sustainable community institutions from scratch, a challenge distinct from those that had confronted them as slaves and those that confronted their poor white neighbors. Though resources were scanty, the stakes in black community-building efforts were high indeed.



Four / Building Up the People

THE STRUGGLE OVER CHURCH AND SCHOOL

In 1983, when the descendants of freedman Allen Parham and his wife, Kitty, celebrated a century of landholding and continuous occupation of the family farm in Granville County, North Carolina, they also recorded and rejoiced in the family's other accomplishments.¹ The farm had grown from the Parhams' original 20-acre purchase to 123 acres; the original house built in 1878 had been remodeled to accommodate children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Within this evidence of the family's strength and endurance, though, the family celebrated most of all that both Julia and Claude Parham, the children of Allen and Kitty Parham, had been educated, as were their children and their children's children, with numerous collegiate and advanced degrees among them. In this lengthy list of educational deeds, of uplift and achievement, rooted deep in the soil of the family homeplace, lay the most important and enduring meaning of owning a farm.

In the years right after emancipation, freedpeople's aspirations for independent community life, however, had run aground on their poverty. As freedman Jacob Thomas commented bitterly years later, Abraham Lincoln must have "had a heap of faith in de [freedman], ter think dat he could live on nothin' at all."² Household production, though just as crucial to community building as it was to family prosperity, could not carry the whole weight of this task. Freedpeople were not going to succeed in building permanent institutions unless they could tap some of

the wealth that whites controlled. But the structure of emancipation in the United States put this wealth out of their reach.

Emancipation was not a straightforward process anywhere in the New World; in the defeated Confederacy, the uncertainties were quite overwhelming.³ Although the United States had rejected gradual emancipation, first legislatively and then by war and proclamation, the freedom that arrived after 1865 looked more like gradualism than like anything else. Certainly, the situation was very far from what either slaves or masters had expected. Emancipation seemed to have changed at once everything and nothing.

North Carolina's land remained largely in the same hands after the war as before, while black political power was contained through violence, gerrymandering, and the overthrow of local control.⁴ Former masters who expected a world turned upside down found themselves still the top rail—awkwardly perched, perhaps, but nevertheless there. The once-enslaved, whose ideas of freedom had almost invariably included leaving plantation life far behind, found they had few options other than to return to it. Southern blacks and southern whites could not be quit of each other, but rather, in defiance of all their expectations, had to work out the meanings of emancipation face-to-face. The northerners, unable or unwilling to preside over a wholesale redirection of southern life, presided instead, as they thought best, over the charged negotiations that ensued between these two aggrieved, impatient, and hostile parties.

Since the meaning of emancipation was not to be settled by a sudden redistribution of resources or reversal of social roles, freedom would be constructed by piecemeal interactions, on the fly, by push and counter-push, with the boundaries of black independence among the principal contested variables. In this context, freedpeople's community-building efforts became the very stuff of defining this new thing called "freedom."⁵ Freedpeople wanted their community institutions, especially their schools and churches, to increase the scope and quality of their independence, but most of the wealth-holders with whom freedpeople had to cooperate hoped that black schools and churches would function

as instruments of restraint and accommodation. Making freedom pay, in the final analysis, would depend as much on winning the battle for school and church as on acquiring a farm.

The process of creating black schools and churches echoed, in its particularity, the general outlines of how blacks and whites adjusted to emancipation. At first, the freedpeople bid strongly for independence, mobilizing all their resources of productivity, skill, and imagination, while frightened southern whites moved desperately to quash black hopes and victorious northerners tried to “civilize” them all. A second stage, visible by 1866 and 1867, found freedpeople accepting helpful input from southern whites in creating churches and from northern whites in sustaining schools. Partnership with whites provided crucially needed resources to black community institutions, but at the price of negotiating with slippery and condescending, if not downright dangerous, allies. Whites tried to figure out how to, as it were, win the war by losing the right battles, to derail the largest of black aspirations by making just the right kind and degree of specific concession. For their part, freedpeople used the resources they controlled to try to make every opening, however grudging, limited, or manipulative, serve their hopes of uplift, prosperity, and independence. Countless repetitions of this kind of interactive conflict of course created considerable mutual mistrust, disdain, and frustration between formal allies.

Stage three began in the early 1870s, when freedpeople won the battle for control of churches but lost the struggle over schools. The northern philanthropists who had financed a portion of the early schooling effort were drawn into an alliance with southern whites in order to create state-supported public schooling, which they hoped would be their most potent and enduring legacy. Southern whites took on schooling for their own very different reasons, namely to assure that, in the words of North Carolina’s Redeemer governor Zebulon Vance, “whatever of education we may be able to give the children of the State, should be imparted under our own auspices and with a thorough North Carolina spirit.”⁶ Freedpeople had to watch as the schools they had built up were systematically dismantled by state policies, and then try to fill in the gaps and make up for the losses with their own resources. Freedpeople may

have more successfully grasped and held control of their religious lives because neither state nor national governments could exercise authority over religion. The possibility of state control of schooling, in any case, doomed freedpeople's original alliance with northern educational reformers.

The last stage of the process happened inside black communities, as churches waxed and schools waned in influence and importance. Freedpeople's early hopes for schooling gave way to deep anger and great frustration. Education remained a central priority and schools a large part of community life, but schools diminished in cultural importance even as the churches' influence expanded. Churches were increasingly free to apply freedpeople's resources in response to the internal dynamics of black communities themselves, while black schools, and the money freedpeople directed to them, remained subject to the distorting power of the white/black collaboration. In the end, churches rather than schools became the independent, multipurpose community centers around which the people could, and did, rally.

Freedpeople created the first schools and churches at the same time, often in the same buildings and conducted by the same person or by members of the same family. In many cases, these first institutions arose before the surrender. Many more sprang up immediately after emancipation. Everywhere they could snatch a free moment and a fragment of a book to work from, freedpeople began educating themselves. Families gathered at home to labor over a Bible text. Soldiers created marching cadences around the alphabet, enabling every man to learn as he drilled. Laborers perused the tattered pages of old spelling books between tasks. One school met under a large oak tree.⁷ A Tar Heel gentleman remarked in 1866 on seeing "groups of little negroes studying their spelling-books" on the doorsteps of his town.⁸

Independent schools of this sort sprouted from local seed, long before missionary teachers arrived in force. John W. Alvord, the Freedman's Bureau superintendent for schools, traveled through the South in the fall of 1865 trying to determine needs and opportunities for education among the former slaves. In Goldsboro, North Carolina, Alvord

found a school taught by “two colored men, who but a little time before commenced to learn themselves, [and] had gathered 150 pupils, all quite orderly and hard at study.” That place, Alvord noted, had never before been visited by a white educator. Halifax, like Goldsboro, had an independent, black-run, tuition school by late 1865.⁹ Alvord observed that black adults and children attended independent black-run schools “scattered all over the state” of Virginia, while in North Carolina, freedpeople “contribute[d] liberally” and in some places “entirely sustain[ed]” their own schools.¹⁰

By late 1866, Alvord reported more than six hundred schools sustained “wholly or in part” by freedpeople. In his second report to the bureau, covering the period from January to July 1866, Alvord revised upward his appraisal of the work done by these “native schools,” reporting that “we estimated in January [1866] that the entire education census of the bureau was 125,000. We now, with increased means of information and greater assurance of certainty, estimate that, beyond the 90,778 pupils as officially reported, there are, including irregular and Sabbath schools, with colored soldiers and individuals who are learning at home, one hundred and fifty thousand (150,000) freedmen and their children [studying their books.]”¹¹ The full extent of such casual schooling can only be guessed, but what can be documented is almost certainly less than what existed.

Churches sprouted in the same way and with much the same spirit, as freedpeople uncovered their long tradition of underground worship.¹² Like the independent schools, founded by those whose literacy predated emancipation, some churches also arose under the leadership of newly freed but long experienced black pastors. Harry Cowan and Joseph Baysmore both had worked under restrictions imposed by slaveowners for the early years of their ministry. Once freed, they plunged into the task of organizing churches and ministering to the freedpeople. Cowan described how he “organized, or assisted in organizing, 37 churches, baptized over 1,500 converts, preached 1,000 funerals, and married an equal number of persons.” Cowan went on to help found the North Carolina Colored Baptist State Convention in 1869.¹³ Joseph Baysmore, for his

part, had been noted even as a child for his piety and preaching. After freedom, he collected a small congregation, was ordained in 1866, and then was released from his membership in a white Baptist church to preach to the freedpeople. He organized eight churches in Halifax and Northhampton Counties, baptized nine hundred believers, and also served as justice of the peace and election registrar.¹⁴

Whole groups of freedpeople also made the move that Joseph Baysmore made, dropping their former affiliations with white churches to set up churches of their own. In one fascinating case, the move was facilitated by a bequest from a former slaveholder, a man locally known as among "the cruelest of the cruel." Having set aside an enormous building lot for Big Zion A.M.E. Zion church in Granville County, this man "worshipped with the black folk and taught Sunday School in their church each and every Sunday until his death." During worship, story has it, he "entreated the Lord to forgive him his sins as he acclaimed to all who could hear how unworthy he was." When he died, he left the parcel of ten or fifteen acres to the church that had hosted his weekly atonements.¹⁵ His former slaves, with what thoughts one can only imagine, built themselves a clapboard church on the lot in 1870.

Among the Protestant denominations, Baptist congregations seem to have reorganized most swiftly and with the least difficulty. The great bulk of black Baptists left white churches in 1865, with another exodus in 1867, following the organization of a general association for black Baptists. Baptist organization was complete with the advent in 1869 of an annual convention for the new freedpeople's churches.¹⁶

Black Methodists and Presbyterians departed from southern white churches in many cases to join up with northern coreligionists. The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) and African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z.) churches, though they long predated the Civil War, had been unable safely to proselytize in the slave states. The northern white Presbyterian church, formed by a prewar schism over church doctrine on slavery, was likewise proscribed from building southern congregations. Emancipation opened up a new and very fruitful field to them all.

After some initial resistance, by 1866, southern white Christians seemed ready to accept and assist in black separation. Black congregants who left Olive Chapel Baptist Church near Apex, North Carolina, in 1866, accepted “plans, labor, and lumber” from white members for the new church they were building near Friendship. White Baptists in Murfreesboro also contributed money for a new building for a congregation organized by black elder Lemuel W. Boone. Black members of First Baptist in Raleigh did not wait to be dismissed, as members of Chapel Hill Baptist had been. In 1868, the Raleigh group, led by freedman Henry Jett, organized its own church and then requested a mass dismissal from the session. The dismissed Chapel Hill members agreed to share use of the building with the white congregation until 1871, by which time they presumably intended to have constructed a sanctuary of their own.¹⁷

Methodists and Presbyterians struggled with the issues raised by the departure of black congregants. In an attempt to retain black members, southern white leadership in both denominations recommended that local churches establish both Sunday schools and day schools for freedpeople, explicitly counting on the freedpeople’s thirst for education to keep them under the religious direction of white congregations. The policy was undone, though, in part because local white congregations strongly opposed creating such schools, and in part because freedpeople did not take the bait.

The black Methodists of Purvis Chapel in Beaufort, North Carolina, for example, affirmed their religious choice in a dramatic confrontation. The chapel had been given to black Methodists for their exclusive use in 1854. In 1873, Reverend Robert Oswald Burton tried to persuade the Purvis Chapel congregation to join up with the new Colored Methodist Church, organized by southern white Methodists as a church for freedpeople, rather than affiliate with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church. Burton assured the assembled congregation “that the mother church still loved them, although they had strayed,” and held up the prospect of uniting all “colored Methodists into one great church.” Just as it seemed to Burton that he would carry the day, the A.M.E.Z. minister who had been called by the congregation rose and read three stanzas from Charles Wesley’s hymn,

Jesus, great Shepherd of the Sheep,
 To thee for help we fly;
 Thy little flock in safety keep;
 For O! the wolf is nigh!
 He comes of hellish malice full,
 To scatter, tear and slay,
 He seizes every struggling soul,
 As his own lawful prey.
 Us unto thy protection take,
 And gather with Thine arm,
 Unless the fold we first forsake
 The wolf can never harm.¹⁸

Presumably, Reverend Burton left quickly, salvaging what dignity he could from his defeat. Nearly twenty thousand southern black Methodists swiftly moved away from white churches, mainly into A.M.E. and A.M.E.Z. congregations.¹⁹

Unlike black Methodists, southern black Presbyterians had no black-run northern institutions to which they could turn, but they collaborated fruitfully with white coreligionists in these years. In May 1867, white Presbyterian minister Luke Dorland entered a mixed congregation at worship and led the blacks out of the church. When he returned the following Sunday, the black Presbyterians had chosen five people to present for ordination as ruling elders, along with five trustees for the new congregation. They also asked Reverend Dorland to restore to membership a young woman previously cast out over an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.²⁰ Despite eleventh-hour white offers of “Sabbath schools, plus regular and special preaching,” blacks swiftly separated from white-run Presbyterian churches.²¹

White assistance need not have originated in any friendly feelings toward black congregations. White Christians generally embraced separation from blacks as the only viable alternative to sharing space, authority, and leadership with black members. White Christians had hoped to continue mixed worship “on the same terms as formerly,” that is, with whites in unchallenged authority, but black Christians refused.

Reverend S. S. Murkland, white pastor of the Bethany church in the southern Concord presbytery, was a singular man who learned this lesson from his own congregation. Murkland tried to persuade his people to share their building with a new black congregation he had organized in the neighborhood. Murkland recorded offering “to preach to the whites once a week *gratis*, if they would allow me the use of the church to preach to the blacks; but they refused my offer, and locked up the Bethany church doors to keep us out. We held our meetings at the stand in the grove outside the church until the weather became too cold. We had an old two-story house called the ‘Cocoonery,’ which a former proprietor had built to raise silkworms. This we fitted up with a chimney and benches, which we used for two or three years, until we got our present house built.”²² Murkland and his wife, Mary, who taught day school for the freedpeople, were threatened with arson and personal violence because of their work. In October of 1866, at his own request, Reverend Murkland was dismissed from the southern church’s Concord Presbytery and transferred to the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, in connection with the northern church. He continued to live among his former parishioners, however, helping to organize the northern church’s new Catawba Presbytery and to train and ordain black ministers.²³ The assistance whites offered black churches more often meant “good riddance” than “Godspeed.”

Southern whites and freedpeople collaborated in the creation of churches over a relatively brief period and in a mostly straightforward manner. Both sides of the collaborative embraced separation, albeit with entirely different feelings and hopes. Once the separation was accomplished, black churches either organized into their own groups, as in the Baptist case, or affiliated with coreligionists from the northern churches, as with the Methodists and Presbyterians. Then a second struggle ensued between southern and northern members over church structure, worship style, and internal discipline in the freedpeople’s congregations.

The African Methodist Episcopal churches faced the cruelest dilemmas in this second struggle. As eager as were the leaders and people of this small northern denomination to take freedpeople under their wing, and as eager as the freedpeople themselves were to embrace the estab-

lished, independent, black-run churches, the northerners could not reconcile themselves to freedpeople's enthusiastic worship styles. A.M.E. bishop Daniel A. Payne spoke for many northern black Methodists when he inveighed against freedpeople's religious shouts, with their stamping, dancing, and calling out. Frankly appalled, he repeatedly reprimanded worshipers and intervened to stop their "ridiculous and "heathenish way[s]." Visiting a "bush harbor" meeting in 1878, Payne recorded that he had "requested the pastor to go and stop their dancing. At his request they stopped their dancing and clapping of hands, but remained singing and rocking their bodies to and fro. . . . I then went and taking their leader by the arm, requested him to desist and sit down and sing in a rational manner. I also told him that it was a heathenish way to worship, disgraceful to themselves, to the race, and to the Christian name. They broke up the ring but would not sit down, and walked sullenly away."²⁴

These freedpeople endeavored to explain themselves to the bishop and to solicit his understanding, but he still found their ways "disgusting" and conducive to immorality. In the end, Payne concluded that leaders who encouraged such practices ought, if necessary, to be excommunicated. "The time is at hand," he wrote, "when the ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church must drive out this heathenish mode of worship or drive out all the intelligent, refined, and practical Christians who may be in her bosom."²⁵ Sooner lose the freedpeople, he felt, than risk the church's good name and northern membership.

But Payne could not leave things there, because, as the freedpeople demonstrated, they were capable of and willing to "walk sullenly away." African Methodists had to, and did, work out accommodations. Ultimately, the southern churches won the right to worship as they thought best, effectively postponing the African Methodist confrontation over worship styles another generation.²⁶

The Presbyterian Church's struggle over ordaining black clergy nicely illustrates how, within the white churches, too, northerners ceded control of institutional life to the freedpeople without categorically withdrawing their support from the black churches. By withholding ordination from black ministers and delaying the creation of day schools,

southern white Presbyterians had quickly lost their halfhearted struggle to keep black members in their churches “under the same terms as formerly.”²⁷ But northern Presbyterians also faltered about ordaining black clergy. Though southern black Presbyterians had initially been willing to accept some leadership from northern white ministers, they soon expressed the expectation that black leadership would take over.²⁸ Clearly only ordaining black men would sustain loyalty and increase recruitment of new members. However, all ordained men had to work together in local presbyteries and at national conventions, and white clergy resisted having to meet black men thus as equals.

Following the lead of men like S. S. Murkland and Luke Dorland, the northern church created the Catawba Presbytery, and welcomed all North Carolina members into it. Creating separate, extralocal presbyteries for its black clergy (and the few white leaders of black congregations) preserved the northern church’s institutionalized racism, while enabling the resumption of recruitment. At the same time, however, the policy required the creation of new segregated seminaries in the South to train black clergy. Biddle Memorial Institute, a Presbyterian seminary that opened in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1871, not only trained ministers but also became one of the cherished few postsecondary schools open to blacks in the state. In that guise, Biddle Institute, created to serve segregation and northern white supremacy, in fact became an important source of educated black leadership.²⁹

Before and after the decision to train and ordain black ministers, the northern Presbyterian Board of Church Erections continued to pay about two-thirds of what congregations requested for their building funds. In the early 1870s, North Carolina freedpeople in return contributed about eight thousand dollars each year to the northern church, mostly to new mission churches in the state, but some even to the church’s General Fund. And, as the report noted, “Much more has been done by them in labor in the erection of churches &c., upon which we have no means of placing anything like a correctly estimated cash value.”³⁰ As with the A.M.E. church, the Presbyterians figured out methods, noble or ignoble, to include freedpeople within their communion without mandating their conversion to northern ways.

The Protestant Episcopal Church, though by far the least significant religious institution among the freedpeople, also maintained a dialectical alliance with black interests. Driven by fear of uneducated black voters, the 1867 General Convention ignored the decided opposition to black schooling among the elite white membership and voted unexpectedly to support black education. The Episcopal Church went on to run a series of segregated primary schools for both white and black children, as well as to found, with freedpeople's help, the St. Augustine Normal School (later University) in Raleigh, where numerous important black North Carolinians received an education.³¹

Though clearly rocked by the struggle over control, northern churches did not abandon the southern membership when they ceded meaningful authority to southern black leaders. Conflicts between institutional interests and freedpeople's goals and aspirations worked some subtle changes in the methods and substance of white racism, while the circumstances of emancipation fostered compromises and innovations that in turn created openings that freedpeople could, and did, turn to their advantage. The churches adopted the substance of a compromise vision James Hood had articulated for schools at North Carolina's 1868 constitutional convention: voluntary segregation for the sake of black control, along with limited but crucial white institutional support. Freedpeople could, therefore, sustain both biracial and biregional alliances within their churches, gaining access to institutional resources and support, without forfeiting the vision of religious freedom they carried with them out of slavery.

The collaboration that grew up around black schooling lasted longer, became far more embattled, and produced an outcome far less satisfactory to freedpeople's hopes and dreams. Freedpeople believed deeply in the value of education, and they were prepared from the start to support their schools. They needed and desired the assistance of their northern white allies, but they took, as American Missionary Association (AMA) teacher William Channing Garrett noted, "a praiseworthy pride in keeping their educational institutions in their own hands." Garrett understood that "there is jealousy of the superintendence of the white man in this matter. What they desire is assistance without control."³² In the

early going, because freedpeople provided resources critical to missionary schools, the school effort remained responsive to their vision. But while freedpeople won control of their churches, they would ultimately lose control of schooling.

When northern educational missionaries and philanthropists first arrived in the defeated Confederacy, they built much of their effort on foundations laid by freedpeople in their earlier independent schools. As Reverend Luke Dorland found black Presbyterians fully ready to create the formal structure of their new parish, so northern educators found freedpeople organized to study, ready to fund their schools, and full of ideas and expectations about what education ought to be. Their collaboration would take many forms, usually mixing contributions in cash, labor, organization, and service. Any arrangement that worked could be tried; improvisation was the watchword of the whole crusade. John W. Alvord counted many schoolhouses owned in whole or in part by the local freedpeople. Alvord also reported that freedpeople contributed for the purchase of essential equipment, like stoves, books, and benches, and that they commonly paid some tuition, leaving the signature of household production everywhere.³³ Missionaries everywhere relied for success upon the ceaseless collaboration and endless ingenuity of the freedpeople they served.

When, for example, the AMA teacher sent to a settlement of freedpeople at James City, North Carolina, retreated north for the summer in 1867, local families paid a black man named Morris to carry on the school.³⁴ Rachel Thomas, a prize pupil in the AMA school, later opened a school of her own in the community, with the American Freedman's Union Commission in New York paying her salary of \$20.00 per month. In Smithville, North Carolina, teacher S. Benson Stearnes gathered \$22.50 from his pupils, which went for a stove, some books, and slates. David Dickson's Fayetteville pupils contributed to pay for wood. The families of Dickson's students paid for "fuel, lights, books" and offered to pay for an assistant should Dickson require one.³⁵

Both individual teachers and the philanthropic organizations themselves counted on freedpeople's contributions. One black AMA teacher, Robert Harris, who taught schools in both Virginia and North Carolina,

boarded in Portsmouth, Virginia, with a local family. By boarding there he shortened his walk to his remote school from four miles each way to two. He repaid his hosts, "a freedman, his wife, and six children," by teaching all the family to read.³⁶ The AMA itself appointed one Hardy Mobley as a teacher, at a salary of six hundred dollars per year, with the stipulation that he would have to raise that sum himself among the people.³⁷ Thomas Tucker, an African born in Sierra Leone, became an AMA teacher after being converted by the AMA's Mendi mission and educated at Oberlin College. Tucker set off to teach in Norfolk, Virginia, before even securing a promise of salary from AMA officials, confident that, with or without their help, he could "carry it on myself & depend for success on God and the people."³⁸ Likewise, Edmonia Highgate, a black native of Syracuse, New York, asked to be sent "post haste" to an as yet informally arranged AMA position in Havre de Grace, Maryland. Highgate pleaded with the home office "not to wait until complete living arrangements had been made. She knew her people well enough . . . to be certain she would not starve."³⁹

The hopes of the Mobleys, Tuckers, and Highgates were not in vain; freedpeople indeed provided sustenance to teachers. AMA teachers often mentioned freedpeople's gifts in their letters home, detailing offerings of both staples and treats. When Samuel S. Ashley, the Freedman's Bureau school superintendent for North Carolina, forwarded the December 1865 report of school expenses to AMA headquarters in New York, he explained that the cost of board was down considerably from its November level. The reason was simple: "During the Holidays much provision has been given us. I have not been obliged to purchase any fuel."⁴⁰ With wood at sixteen dollars a cord, the freedpeople had harvested enough to keep the schoolhouse and teachers' residences warm. In Wilmington, another holiday gift of a "small basket of Eggs" cheered teacher Lucy Haskell. Haskell reported at another time that, on a trip around the district distributing clothing, freedpeople had given her "rice, potatoes and one man promised to bring some Chickens. I hope he will," she sighed, "for our Table never boasts of such *luxuries* as they would be."⁴¹

The labor, goods, and cash freedpeople brought to their schools were

precisely the sorts of items the household economy was primed to produce, but freedpeople did not provide this assistance out of any surplus. Indeed, Fayetteville's people, as teacher David Dickson reported, had "lost nearly everything at the time Sherman passed through, and many are very bitter." Samuel Ashley wrote to New York officials that "there is much suffering [at Fayetteville] and in the vicinity." In a rare display of passion, Ashley added, "Congress *must* come to the help of the Freedmen . . . God will avenge his poor."⁴²

Philanthropists and freedpeople collaborated on securing and preparing school buildings too. William Hillery, who would later become an A.M.E.Z. bishop, taught an AMA school in Virginia right after the war. Hillery closed his school in October 1865 so that he and his students could line the walls "for more warmth."⁴³ Men and boys chopped firewood and hauled it to the schoolhouse; children brought chunks of "fat pine," the resin-rich pine from which turpentine was extracted, to use as torches or to start a fire in the stove.⁴⁴

Equipment needed by schools could also be commissioned from local artisans. James Lowry, a black Wilmington carpenter who later became a teacher himself under AMA auspices, began by boarding teachers when they first arrived from the North. For feeding and housing a dozen or more missionaries, as well as making blackboards and repairing chairs for the schools, Lowry billed Samuel Ashley for forty dollars. The AMA was slow in paying, forcing Lowry to importune Ashley repeatedly. Eventually he received twenty-five dollars and apparently had to be content.⁴⁵

An exasperated letter from Ashley to the AMA's New York office in November 1865, describes his efforts to secure desks for the local schools and suggests the importance even of collaborative scrounging: "I need about 260 ft of Boards to make desks for writing scholars . . . the Bureau has some lumber just across the river, but the Quarter Master delays sending a scow for it when a scow and a tug to pull it are at hand. Delayed day after day until a month is gone. And when the lumber reaches this side of the river I must hire a carpenter to plane them and put up the desks."⁴⁶ There is no record of whether Ashley got the lumber, nor of the person whom he hired to transform it into school desks,

but his letter testifies to the kind of joint, bushwhacking creativity on which the success of schooling depended.

Freedpeople found time to fix up unused sheds, abandoned white churches, former slave cabins, empty corncribs, a jail, and even a slave pen and auction house to be used for schools.⁴⁷ They also worked with the missionaries to build new school buildings. An “AMA school” in the eastern North Carolina town of Beaufort was built in 1869 by the local freedpeople on their own land, with money from the association. In Fayetteville, a larger town, freedpeople purchased a lot for about \$140 in 1867. On it, they built a school with \$3,800 from the Freedman’s Bureau and the AMA. They furnished the building with another \$400 gift, then added \$200 worth of improvements out of their own pockets.⁴⁸

As the building projects suggest, the collaboration between freedpeople and philanthropists could become quite intricate and sophisticated. One series of letters outlines a highly elaborate fund-raising event in Wilmington in 1866, jointly sponsored by missionaries and a local committee of freedpeople to benefit their school, an occasion that turned fiscal necessity into festivity. Ashley first wrote to ask the New York office to “Please purchase and forward by next steamer a Bible and a Methodist Hymn Book, which, both together, shall cost twenty-five (\$25). They are designed for a prize. Let the Bible be a family Bible as nicely printed and bound as the price will allow. The Hymn book, gilt and handsomely bound. They are for a committee of colored people who are endeavoring to raise money to build a school house. They offer these books as prizes to the solicitor who will collect the most money.”⁴⁹ Although procured by the AMA, the prizes were paid for by the freedpeople. Ashley noted later in the letter that he would either keep the twenty-five dollars and credit the AMA, or forward the cash to them. Two weeks later, Ashley again requested a Bible and hymnbook. “Those already sent,” he explained, “they are very much pleased with and wish to reserve them for a Fair they are getting up in aid of the schools.” Almost certainly the fair was livened up with much excellent food and numerous household necessities, handmade and for sale. Ashley concluded his letter, “The money for the Bible and Hymn book already sent and also for those ordered I will forward to you or credit to the Assoc. as you

may direct.”⁵⁰ The freedpeople organized themselves into a committee, designed the events, and did the legwork of the campaign, but the AMA stood by ready to help with finding the desired prizes and, of course, overseeing the school they were all creating. This was collaboration at its best.⁵¹

But even working together, missionaries and freedpeople could scarcely provide adequate facilities, not least because the schools were built in the teeth of overt and violent hostility from local whites. James Hood, who eventually became a bishop of the A.M.E.Z. Church, served for several years as the state superintendent of colored schools. In this capacity, he saw many of these early schools and commented in 1869 that some were “but a small improvement on being out of doors . . . The freedmen seem anxious to have schools for their children, and are putting up such buildings as they feel able to erect. Where they can do no better they pile up rough logs and cover them with rived boards . . . Poor as these buildings are, they are often subjected to the enmity of the whites and are burned down.”⁵² Missionary teachers, isolated and few, and under continual harassment and ostracism punctuated by violent confrontations, concluded that the opposition of southern whites was the single greatest obstacle to the success of their schooling program.

Finding a way to win southern white approval for the work became an urgent necessity in the minds of the northern educators. The other great desiderata to emerge from these years of collaboration was the need for a continuous supply of teachers to meet the freedpeople’s overwhelming demand for schools. To accomplish these tasks, however, northern philanthropists had to shift scarce resources out of primary schooling toward secondary and normal schools, and they had to build relationships with southern whites. In both these ways, northern educators moved sharply away from freedpeople’s own priorities and preferences.

Evolving northern priorities critically weakened the alliance between freedpeople and philanthropists, but in truth the alliance had been shaky from the start. Though for different reasons than those of the white southerners who bid good riddance to their black coreligionists, the freedpeople’s northern allies also hoped to assume charge of the destiny

of the former slaves, while freedpeople expected and desired only northern assistance.

Northern racism and paternalism of course significantly shaped this conflict. In 1866, Samuel Ashley got himself into a revealing tangle over the desire of a black teacher, Sallie Daffin, to come south to Wilmington to teach. Though he needed teachers badly, Ashley declined Daffin's request because he would not house her with the white teachers in the Mission House, and she would not consent to board with a local black family. Though by Ashley's own admission, Daffin was "a lady and a *friend* . . . an excellent teacher and a faithful Christian" [emphasis in the original], she could not be welcomed into the Mission House because of her color. The problem, as Ashley saw it, was that wherever white and black teachers boarded together the association was convicted by the local white community of fostering "social equality" between the races. This additional hostility made an already difficult job even harder. Ashley did remain uncomfortable with his decision about Daffin; in his letter declining to appoint her he admitted that his decision might be a great wrong and asked for some guidance from his colleagues at headquarters. Even granting Ashley's administrative predicament, however, it is noteworthy that, had Daffin in fact been accepted by Ashley and gone to Wilmington, she would have discovered that the "equality" that so worried Ashley consisted of segregated rooms, with white teachers housed in one room and black servants, along with Daffin, assigned to another.⁵³

As the insult to Sallie Daffin indicates, sensitivity to the feelings of southern whites helped to shape the equivocal way the AMA lived out its commitment to black education. Convinced of the need to appease southern whites, and generally secure in a sense of their own racial, regional, and intellectual superiority, northern missionaries were prepared from the first to ask freedpeople to accept and forgive acts like this one from those who expected to be taken as freedpeople's "friends," acts that violated the conscientious purposes of missionary work.

Insofar as the religious and political commitments that brought missionaries to the South ensured nagging doubts about those compromises and capitulations, paternalism emerged as a convenient solution.

Ignoring the evidence of their working partnership with freedpeople, missionaries like Ashley could convince themselves that, heavily victimized by enslavement, the freedpeople were virtual “children.” Their full rights would of course be granted and respected when they achieved full “adult” stature. Until that day, the Yankee missionaries could go on in theory defending, in Ashley’s own words, “the manhood, all the social, intellectual, civil, and moral rights of the colored people to their fullest extent,” while violating them in practice.⁵⁴ From the freedpeople’s perspective, this was collaboration at its worst.

Though freedpeople cherished the same hopes for control of their schools as they did for their churches, white educators were at best indifferent to, and at worst considerably alarmed by, the prospect of black independence. For the missionaries, schooling on the Yankee model was far more than a means to improve the literacy and general prospects of the freedpeople; schooling was key to a wholesale regeneration of southern culture preparatory to reintegrating the South fully into the Union.⁵⁵ Southern whites already scorned the common schools as part of the legacy of Reconstruction; “giving over” the schools to freedpeople would, in the minds of northern educators, forfeit all hope of inducing southern whites to participate.⁵⁶

Public primary schooling had been virtually a dead letter in North Carolina for decades. The first proposal, in 1816, for a comprehensive educational system in the state had not survived a first reading in the General Assembly.⁵⁷ By 1832, white southerners had made the lack of public schooling a mark of regional identity. Though strongly in favor of educating the public, to prevent children from “growing up unprepared and uncultivated as the forest of the brake,” antebellum educator Joseph Caldwell argued that such schools must be self-supporting, since no southerner would submit to being taxed for anything beyond the “bare necessities of government and the public tranquility. We are,” Caldwell opined, “a people whose habits and wishes revolt at everything that infringes upon an entire freedom of choice upon almost every subject.”⁵⁸

This regionalist rhapsody matured into wartime arguments articulated by the state’s educational superintendent Calvin H. Wiley that

public schooling would enhance the prestige of the Confederate nation, now “arraigned at the bar of the world as unfit, by an inferior civilization.” Moreover, continued Wiley, “where African slavery is a permanent institution of the country, it is of the utmost importance that the masses of the ruling race should maintain a moral as well as a social and political elevation above the subject one.”⁵⁹ But these ideas had inspired only minimal interest in schooling before 1865. Just after the surrender, Wiley’s good friend, Jonathan Worth, a future governor of the state, wrote that, in his opinion, “If we educate white children at public expense, we will be required to educate the negroes in like manner—and your school fund being reduced to nothing and our people impoverished, I think the Com[mon] School system had better be discouraged, for a time, and thus avoid the question as to educating the negroes.”⁶⁰ War and emancipation had left the state Department of Public Instruction entirely without a public constituency and bankrupt of funds, motivation, and rationale.

Four or five years of the proliferation of schools for freedpeople, however, had begun to stimulate new interest among southern whites in public schools, even in state-supported systems like those of the northern states.⁶¹ Their motives, far from noble, ranged from the fear of competition from educated blacks to the desire that black education discourage rather than foster black aspiration.⁶² Northern philanthropists, greatly encouraged by signs of seeming reform in their recent enemies, failed to inquire deeply into their motives, and reoriented missionary work toward cooperation with this small group of “enlightened” southern whites. Enthusiastically embracing this unexpected leaven in the lump, northern philanthropists persuaded themselves that they would remake the South in the Yankee image through tax-supported public school systems.⁶³

Building upon this pragmatic alliance with northern philanthropists, North Carolina whites moved in on black schools between 1868 and 1872, at almost the same time that they largely retreated from their earlier involvement in the new black churches. After years of arson, harassment, and assaults directed by southern whites against their schools, freedpeople were far from sanguine about this new alliance, but north-

ern philanthropists for the most part ignored their doubts. Far from abandoning black schooling, philanthropists argued, they were working to establish it upon a firm and permanent basis, safely provided for through a state bureaucracy and public taxation. The educational provisions in the new state constitution, formulated at the convention of 1868, would guarantee tax support for schools, set up a new state Department of Public Instruction, and, best of all, freedpeople were told, begin to systemize what had been for too many years a haphazard and beleaguered effort. Here was the model of proper organization long sought by the missionaries; they did not grasp that by setting up a state-run system in place of the old ad hoc collaborative process they were turning freedpeople's education over to their worst enemies while simultaneously removing the freedpeople's most important source of power.

Bishop James Hood attended the 1868 constitutional convention as a delegate. Hood had long observed, advocated for, and supported North Carolina's black schools, and he addressed the subject at the convention in tones that suggest the bitterness freedpeople felt over the turn that philanthropic priorities had taken. Hood spoke against including in the new state constitution an explicit order for school segregation by race. He argued first that mandatory segregation would be unjust to blacks. Then in a splendid stroke of bitter rhetorical inversion, he argued that legal segregation was unnecessary, since freedpeople would undoubtedly choose separate schools of their own accord, in order to be sure of having black teachers. Hood remarked,

My experience has been that the colored people in this state generally prefer colored preachers, when other things are equal, and I think the same will be found to be true respecting teachers. As the whites are in the majority in this state, the only way we can hope to have colored teachers is to have separate schools. And with all due respect to the noble self-sacrificing devotion that white teachers from the North have shown to the cause of the ignorant and despised colored people in the South—without detracting one iota from the amount of gratitude we owe them for that genuine philanthropy . . .—I must be permitted to say that it is impossible for

white teachers, educated as they necessarily are in this country, to enter into the feelings of colored pupils as the colored teacher does . . . I do not believe that it is good for our children to eat and drink daily the sentiment that they are naturally inferior to the whites, which they do in three-fourths of all the schools where they have white teachers.⁶⁴

Hood's peroration belies his measured opening; the debate over school segregation had stung him into saying forcibly and publicly that, however well-meaning white missionaries might be, and however much they might have done for freedpeople to that moment, they were no longer with the freedpeople's cause, and maybe in truth, they never had been.⁶⁵

Reverend Hood lost that fight, and North Carolina inaugurated its constitutionally segregated public school system in 1869. Northern philanthropists immediately began to channel their contributions to black schools through the state bureaucracy. Samuel Ashley was forced to resign in 1870 when his salary as superintendent was deemed "not a necessary expense" and cut from the state budget.⁶⁶

When the Redeemers swept to power in the state in 1872, they made the first of many laws that privileged white pupils at the expense of black pupils. With school funding limited, the Democrats created a new school law, justified as an economy and efficiency measure, mandating that no public funds would be given to any school that did not first raise half the sum requested on its own. Furthermore, school funds would be disbursed on a first-come, first-served basis until they were exhausted, rather than being formally apportioned among the counties according to the size of the local school-age population.⁶⁷ White schools that could expeditiously collect a fund of private monies on which to base a large requisition from the school fund could exhaust it before poorer, more remote, or less well-organized black (or white) communities had had time to raise their shares and make their own requisitions.

Freedpeople responded to the new system by demonstrating that, if forced to choose, they preferred more independence even if it meant impoverished institutions, inadequate equipment, and limited teacher training. Turning once again to the household economy, freedpeople

toiled on to educate their children without either support from the state system or northern philanthropy. In 1876, four years after the inauguration of the public schools in the state, freedpeople, though taxed for schools by the state, continued also to pay privately for their own schools. In Raleigh, parents pledged to pay ten cents a week to keep the local school open after state appropriations ran out.⁶⁸ Another former missionary school in Raleigh, which met at Long Church, reported a successful “exhibition and concert . . . for the purpose of raising some money to pay for repairs of church.” Besides repairing the sanctuary/schoolroom, the pupils at Long Church routinely contributed “about enough for light and fuel.”⁶⁹

Black educators found that the changed relationship to both northern and southern whites reduced the absolute amount of freedpeople’s resources available to their schools and changed the meaning of freedpeople’s independent efforts. Schooling saw its share of freedpeople’s means diminish, because the people had to pay twice, once for state school taxes and a second time directly to black schools. Meager as freedpeople’s means were and remained, there simply was not enough to do very much for the schools under these circumstances. Primary schools stayed open only two months of the year, and black teachers earned little more than common laborers.⁷⁰

Despite the virtual abandonment of black primary schooling, black literacy rates continued to rise.⁷¹ But even as freedpeople labored to sustain the schools on their own, they watched the initial northern admiration for their self-help efforts evaporate. The same behaviors that northern officials had earlier praised as evidence of freedpeople’s “pluck” and devotion now drew official scorn as shameful signs that freedpeople were culturally irredeemable.⁷² Why else would they prefer the ragged schools they could create for themselves, or even no schooling at all, to the institutions now supported by both state and philanthropic funding? That conclusion, in turn, justified continuing disregard for the desires, and deafness to the protests, of southern black educators, families, and students. Schooling as an avenue for black advancement, as an emblem of freedom, was all but overthrown.

In 1920, under Charles Aycock, a reform-minded superintendent of

Public Instruction, North Carolina undertook to survey the quality of the public schools. The survey, written and published to emphasize the degree of improvement achieved under the aegis of twentieth-century school reform, inadvertently revealed the extent to which freedpeople had had to rely on their own efforts for more than twenty years after the advent of tax-supported public education. The survey report noted that, in 1918, 7 percent of black children still studied in log schoolhouses, compared to only 1 percent of white ones. As late as 1905, fully 44 percent of black children sat on homemade benches at homemade desks; 15 percent still did in 1918.⁷³ Though school buildings had cost upwards of five hundred dollars to build during Reconstruction, the average value of grounds, buildings, and equipment for black schools was only fifty dollars in 1880. It had climbed to two hundred dollars, at least officially, by 1910.⁷⁴

H. L. Trigg, an official in the state department of education in the 1930s, implicitly admitted that the state had invested nearly nothing in black schools. Trigg did not even bother to mention the state system when he listed those institutions that had “furnished the Negro his chief opportunity for education” prior to 1900. Perhaps the most eloquent description of the state of black schools, one that ironically suggests both their dilapidated condition and the continuing efforts made by freedpeople to make the best of the situation, appeared in yet another state report on education, this one looking back over the twentieth century from the 1960s. Speaking of black schools in the 1920s, the author wrote, “A large number of the rural schools had negligible furnishings and the buildings were in deplorable condition. As was said of one of these schools, you could study animal life through the cracks in the floor, plant life through the openings in the walls, and astronomy through the holes in the roof.”⁷⁵ Whether rural black children ever attempted such studies must remain a mystery. But it is virtually undeniable that, under the circumstances, without wealth or justice, these were the best educational opportunities many communities could secure.

Winning the struggle for control marked the black churches just as losing marked the schools. The desire for education never faded, nor did the quest to secure it ever end, but southern schooling became an

ever less promising road to black leadership and achievement. Churches, meanwhile, as they came more securely under black management and grew ever more responsive to black communities and concerns, increased proportionately in importance.

Freedpeople invested heavily in their churches as soon as they had them firmly under their own control, beginning in the middle of the 1870s. Since they belonged to the people, and needed to serve no other master, churches remained responsive to black communities. Churches rewarded the cherishing attention they received by providing a focus of community and family life, a secure base of identity, a safe place to celebrate, grieve, or come together for other purposes. Freedpeople's monies were undeniably well spent in building up their churches.

One major investment the people made in their churches was to build and rebuild better and better sanctuaries, as time and resources increased or need dictated. Records suggest that black congregations paid to build and rebuild their sanctuaries perhaps twice or three times, moving from the original casual or temporary arrangement, like Reverend Murkland's "Cocoonery," into a log church. Once established in the log building, a congregation might amass the funds to rebuild or refurbish in clapboard or even brick, perhaps also adding a steeple and a bell.

Both Antioch and Huntsville Baptist Churches in Granville County followed this pattern, beginning during slavery as brush arbor gatherings, when groups of slaves were permitted to worship separately from their Granville County masters. Antioch's hidden grove was "located within 400 yards of the present church site." By 1876, the trustees of Antioch had purchased land and begun to build a wooden frame church. This wooden building would be remodeled, refurnished, and faced with brick by the congregation in 1952.⁷⁶ The freedpeople at Huntsville built themselves a log church, which they later replaced with a larger clapboard structure. In the 1920s, their descendants built a brick church on the same site.⁷⁷ Big Zion A.M.E. Zion church also recorded the people's emergence from hiding, the purchase of land, and the construction of successively more commodious and impressive houses of worship.⁷⁸

Deeds recorded in Granville County suggest that most black congre-

gations paid market price or higher for land they bought to build on, which may also partially explain the lapse of years between the organization of congregations and the construction of buildings. New Corinth Baptist Church bought its lot in 1874 from a member for the going rate of ten dollars an acre. In 1871, the trustees of Flat Creek Baptist, like several others, paid twenty-five dollars for the single acre their church stood on, when good farmland sold for about ten dollars an acre. Blue Wing Grove Church, an exception to this rule, acquired one acre for one dollar from two of its members, C. A. and Louisa B. Tuck, "in consideration of [their] love and respect for religious and educational advantages."⁷⁹ Eight Granville County churches purchased building lots between 1871 and 1880, and another did so in 1887. All these churches still existed a century later.⁸⁰

The autobiography of William H. Heard, a successful A.M.E. pastor and bishop who began his itinerant ministry in 1880, records many contribution drives around the South aimed at building new churches in the places where he served. The 1909 rebuilding of St. Paul's A.M.E. in Rockingham County in western North Carolina suggests how the contribution drives worked and highlights the link between repeated rebuilding efforts and freedpeople's household production.

The congregation of St. Paul's had built its first church in 1878, on one acre purchased from two local whites. Other sanctuaries may have been erected in the intervening years, but in October 1909 the congregation began a drive to raise money for its last building. A ledger kept during that fund drive survives.⁸¹ The drive lasted nearly a year and half and raised somewhat less than a hundred dollars.

Male and female members of St. Paul's pledged separately and in their own names. Several pledges were also received from local whites. Most males promised five dollars, and the ledger recorded that a majority paid their pledges in full. Women offered one or two dollars, and fewer of them are recorded as paid. At the same time, the ledger shows several contributions of "chicken, cake and eggs" and "candy and apples," gifts probably donated by churchwomen to enliven some fund-raising event.

A large chunk of the total fund was raised through a "voting contest." This sort of contest, often for the crown of most beautiful young

woman in the church, was a common fund-raising ploy. Members would vote by contributing money to the woman they thought the loveliest. Whichever young woman turned in the most money won the contest, and the church building fund got the proceeds.⁸² With its funds, the congregation built a small, clapboard church with a bell tower. It stood until 1987, when the abandoned structure finally collapsed in a storm.⁸³

The congregation at St. Paul's built its new sanctuary using all the resources of the household economy. Small-scale efforts of a number of families, supplemented by fund-raising events that drew on household goods as much as on household cash raised a fund of one hundred dollars. Carpentry, stitchery, painting, and hauling that the sanctuary needed but that the congregation could not purchase within the one-hundred-dollar budget was probably provided free by members.

Churches, of course, required continuing support in between building drives, and Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, in her study of Promised Land, South Carolina, offers a glimpse of the structure of regular weekly contributions that sustained black churches. They too, have the flavor of household production. The records of Promised Land's Mt. Zion A.M.E. indicate that, for the year beginning in May 1895 and ending in April 1896, the church collected \$25.76. As Bethel writes, "Over half the collections were used to maintain the church and purchase supplies such as books, pens, paper, and the like. Twenty-eight percent of the church funds (\$7.33) were expended for charitable purposes, and the balance of the money was paid to the district supervisor and a presiding elder. There were no funds allocated for a pastor's salary; and Isaac Moragne [the pastor] received his pay in food, clothing, and other consumable goods from the community and the congregation."⁸⁴ Imagining such scenes repeated again and again at church after church across the post-bellum South provides a good sense of the importance of household production to the communal aspects of creating freedom.

More important than the structural stability of the churches was their ability to respond to the internal concerns of the black communities they served. Differences that freedpeople had among themselves often concerned how best to preserve the church's independence and integrity within the racial and economic realities of the times. Honest

people disagreed again and again over how to choose allies, find appropriate degrees of compromise, apply pressure, and exploit the opportunities that did emerge. But these conflicts reflected concerns internal to black communities; resolution of them could lay the foundations for real institutional growth, not just, as was the case with schools, set up the next line of trenches to be defended against inevitable assault.

One such arena of conflict was over linking religion to politics. By their exodus from white churches, black Christians had vigorously affirmed a desire to match their new legal and political status with an independent religious life. In 1867, the *white* Baptists of Chowan Association echoed black understandings of the connections among race, religion, and politics by formally dismissing all black men who had run away from their masters and joined the Union Army. White Methodists linked politics and religion explicitly with the creation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.). Black Methodists, who largely spurned the C.M.E. in favor of the A.M.E., the A.M.E.Z., or the northern white Methodist organizations, reinforced their contempt for white paternalist Methodism by calling the C.M.E. the “rebel Church,” “Democratic Church,” and “the Old Slavery Church.” The connection between southern white Methodism and the C.M.E. was, in the frustrated words of C.M.E. bishop, Charles Phillips, “the prolific cause of most of the misrepresentations that were heaped upon us . . . These were powerful weapons against us.”⁸⁵ However unjust the epithets may have seemed to Phillips, it remained a “peculiarity” of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church that, by the terms of its Discipline, clergy stayed “aloof from politics,” and forbid the use of their houses of worship for any “political speeches and meetings.”⁸⁶

Many black ministers did embrace politics, though, following an honorable prewar tradition. Some followed leads from their congregations, including “translating the local residents’ desire for a school into a reality.”⁸⁷ John B. Eaves, North Carolina Republican state chairman, turned to black ministers to get out the vote in 1888 to reelect black Republican congressional representative Henry P. Cheatham. “Tell [the black ministers],” he urged his Republican Party workers, that “the Democratic managers are determined to elect Cheatham’s opponent [Furni-

fold Simmons], by fair means or foul, and that Cheatham's defeat, in the largest Negro District in the United States, will be an everlasting disgrace to the Negro race . . . Ask these ministers to go to the polls and work for the election of Professor Cheatham, and for the uplifting of the colored race. THIS IS A RELIGIOUS DUTY."⁸⁸ It is not known how many ministers saw Cheatham's election the way Eaves hoped they would. It is true, though, as Carter G. Woodson has argued, that post-war black churches were the most important institutions in black life and as such, could be "overworked to supply the needs" of all others, including politics, education, and moral reform.⁸⁹

For all the seemingly obvious connections between radical politics and black religion, both before and after the war, here too emancipation and its aftermath had changed the rules. The same commitment to sustaining the people that encouraged some to blend politics and religion led others to try to insulate religious institutions from the rage and violence that political differences inspired. In 1868, A.M.E. minister T. G. Steward castigated other black ministers for promoting black enfranchisement and the distribution of land before building a firm educational base for the community. Said Steward, "Give [freedmen] the elective franchise and nothing else, and you put saddles on their backs for white politicians to ride upon, and well will they use them. Another says: 'Give them wealth; place capital in their hands; give them lands . . . ' With nothing else given the colored man: How long would he be able to hold his wealth or make it contribute to his good?"⁹⁰ The franchise and land ownership not only promised more trouble than ease, Steward believed, but they also distracted freedpeople from the inner regeneration that he thought should be their main business.

In one sense, Steward embraced the highly conservative and paternalistic idea that freedpeople were not yet ready for the trials and responsibilities of citizenship, or, in the parlance of the time, for "manhood." In another sense, though, his ostensible denigration of freedpeople is much more directly an attack on whites. Steward did not argue, as many whites did, that blacks would abuse the franchise but rather that whites could not be trusted not to abuse enfranchised blacks. Steward did not impute the supposed inability of blacks to hold on

to property only to weaknesses of theirs but also to the knavery and hostility of whites. Deeply enmeshed in the complex process of creating exploitable opportunities for the people, Steward saw more hope in their growing quietly stronger from within than in their braving relentless and dangerous reprisals by courting the formalities of full citizenship.

The conservative implications of this position cannot be overstated, but it was a conservatism rooted in the necessities of negotiation that white resistance made inevitable. Most important of all, Steward's was just one alternative among several that could be heard in the forum of the black churches. And because black churches survived under black control, as places where the possibilities of freedom could be thus debated, black churches became the central and most enduring institutions of postwar black life.



Conclusion

When the black-run North Carolina Mutual Assurance Company wanted to advertise its services in 1914, the company chose to attach its credibility to an image of the postbellum household economy. The company printed a calendar, the monthly pages of which were stapled beneath a picture entitled “A Penny Short.” The picture showed “an old Negro couple seated at a table in an old cabin counting by means of a lighted candle protruding from the neck of a quart bottle money which they had saved. Puzzlement marks their countenances as the old man counts on his finger in an attempt to locate a missing penny.”¹ The sentimentalized image eloquently captured key elements of the structure of the freedpeople’s economic lives: careful saving, attentiveness to small sums, the joint labor of husband and wife, and the implied necessity for secrecy.

Another twentieth-century image exposes still more about how the household economy worked. In 1947, the *Greensboro Daily News* honored James and Florence Hardin Camp, black owners of 785 acres and the founders of the new Camp Negro School. The *Daily News* discussed in some detail how the Camp fortune, a large amount of which was now to be devoted to educating Greensboro’s black youngsters, had been acquired. Young James Camp, it seems, had run away from sharecropping in the 1890s, a crime at the time but fifty years later presented as a credit to his manhood and ambition. He chopped wood for a living until he was fortunate to “acquire” as his wife the “educated daughter of a proud family”: “The two began with a wheelbarrow, three chickens, a mule and buggy, one keen mind, another dogged one, and two tireless arms. They lived on greens, molasses, and dried fruit which they re-

ceived free. They bought nothing. Then five years later came the first down payment on a 47-acre tract.”²

The two images, one stylized and the other boosterish, together tell an essential story about the transformation of emancipation into freedom, through the agency of the freedpeople themselves. The private world of saving, counting, and doing without grew from the rejection of dependency in favor of ambition. The realization of that ambition came not just with the acquisition of land but also and necessarily with the endowment of the community, in this case through its schools.

Much of importance to the making of freedom also remains unspoken or invisible in these images though. Why did the old couple have to count by candlelight? Were they afraid, or were they, like so many, working past sundown well into their old age? What terrors did James Camp endure in his flight from sharecropping; what exploitation had driven him to that dangerous course? And who raised those essential greens if Florence Hardin Camp did not add the strength of her own “tireless arms” to that of her husband’s? And note how Greensboro’s children still depended for their education on privately financed schools; won’t the same paper that celebrated the Camps’ generosity oppose desegregation with all its editorial power a decade hence?

There is little point in asking which version of freedpeople’s experience is more telling, or which characterizes the outcome of emancipation more fully. The truth is in the ambiguity; emancipation as such neither worked nor failed. As Patsy Gorman Mitchner remembered it all at age eighty-four, “Slavery wus a bad thing an’ freedom, of de kin’ we got wid nothin’ to live on wus bad. Two snakes full of pisen. One lyn’ wid his head pintin’ north, de other wid his head pintin’ south. Dere names wus slavery an’ freedom . . . Both bit de [n——], an’ dey wus both bad.”³ Certainly she was right. But Mitchner’s quarrel was not with freedom itself but with the *kind* of freedom she got, and therein is an insight and a distinction of major importance. Freedom is very far from self-evident; just as there are degrees, so too there are kinds of freedom.

In the rage of civil war, the jubilee of emancipation, and the struggle of Reconstruction, “freedom” in the United States definitively lost any singular and self-evident quality it may have possessed, plunging the

nation into a series of experiments with “kinds” of freedom, which continue to this day.⁴ The emancipation of America’s slaves also emancipated America from the partial freedom envisioned by its eighteenth-century designers, unexpectedly precipitating not just the task of rebuilding the Union but also the much more protracted and difficult job of redefining the “freedom” on which that Union was formally based.

Reconstruction was less the last act of the Civil War than it was the first act of the rest of this crucial national drama. As freedpeople set about the work of building new lives for themselves, they also took the biggest part in the great redesign of American freedom itself. And the tangible results of their work incarnate an important vision of American freedom. Theirs was not the vision that carried their own day, but it is a vision that we, as heirs of their efforts and as participants in the continuing work of defining freedom in America, might profit by examining.

Freedom was, first and foremost, a personal treasure, with towering importance for personal happiness. Freedman Jacob Thomas said of slavery, “Dar’s dis much, we aint worried ‘bout livin’ den lak we does now,” and of freedom, “dar’s dis much fer bein’ free. I has got thirteen great gran’chilluns an’ I knows whar dey ever’one am.” Thomas, and others like him, could know where their great-grandchildren were because of efforts men, women, and children had made since emancipation to keep their families near, to provide homes, to build communities, to challenge the powers of oppression, in short to bring about a life wherein generations of poor people could find some sustenance and satisfaction. Thomas’s knowledge was no accident; for freedpeople who could “charm the snake” of freedom, living with all their kin was one fruit of their achievement.

Many lasting and significant communal achievements can also be credited to the first generation of North Carolina freedpeople. By 1900, for example, 53 percent of North Carolina’s black population had achieved formal literacy.⁵ To be sure, literacy by the definition of the federal census may have represented only minimal competence. Nevertheless, the improvement from the days of slavery was real and owing in significant measure to the many independent schools that proliferated

right after freedom and survived the ensuing thirty years. Landownership also increased. In his summary of information relating to African Americans from the federal census of 1900, W. E. B. Du Bois noted, "In the northern part of North Carolina, near the Virginia line, are two counties reporting a majority of negro farmers. These counties do not show the largest proportion of ownership, but they are among those having the largest absolute number of owners: it should be noted that negro owners of farms are comparatively numerous throughout the State."⁶ In the two counties to which Du Bois referred, Halifax and Warren, 61 percent and 66 percent, respectively, of all farms were operated by black farmers. In Halifax, 20 percent of those black farmers owned all or part of the land they worked; in Warren County, the figure was 29 percent. Granville County fell in between; 299 black families, 23 percent of the county's 1,321 black farmers, owned all or part of the land they worked.⁷ As Du Bois noted, the number of black-owned farms had grown absolutely since 1880, though not in proportion to the population, implying the continuing hardships faced by black farm families.

Black-owned farms continued to be small, making it likely that black farm families still drew on dual farming, mortgage credit, and household production in their quest for advancement until at least the end of the nineteenth century. The continuing presence of household production and its relation to agricultural life is further suggested by Du Bois's figures on the rates of gainful employment among American blacks. He found that "Negro breadwinners constitute 62.2 per cent of all negroes at least 10 years of age. For whites the corresponding per cent is 48.6, and for southern whites 46.9."⁸ The number of women gainfully employed "accounts for about three-fourths of the difference in the proportion of breadwinners in the two races. . . . More than one-fourth (26 per cent) of the negro wives and two-thirds (67 percent) of the negro widows report a gainful occupation and the proportions have increased since 1890 from 22.7 percent for wives and 62.6 per cent for widows. . . . Among females at least 10 years of age, 40.7 per cent of the negroes and only 16 per cent of the whites and 11.8 per cent of the southern whites report money-getting occupations."⁹ Du Bois does not limit his analysis only to the formal waged labor of women, however. In

the same discussion, he notes, "These differences [in the proportion of people employed] might be due to the greater prevalence of agricultural pursuits among negroes, that class of occupations furnishing an unusually good field for employing boys and old men. But indirect evidence indicates that among negroes engaged in agriculture, young men, old men, and women help in breadwinning much more generally than they do among whites engaged in the same class of work."¹⁰ In 1900, in short, as they had from the earliest days of freedom, black farming families still engaged in full-family activities, relying on a variety of productive strategies to provide the resources their freedom required.

Freedpeople used the proceeds of their work to support family and community ambitions. Economic and cultural autonomy, though eagerly sought, was as much a means to an end as an end in itself. The pinnacle of aspiration for most was, tacitly or explicitly, to overthrow the power of race hatred and exclusion to shape their lives, and to substitute in its place education, ambition, and prosperity. Acquiring the means was not the same as achieving the end, but it helped. When Nate Shaw, an Alabama cotton farmer, was arrested with a group of other tenant unionists in 1932 for obstructing the confiscation of a neighbor's livestock, his economic stability made all the difference in the survival of his family. That he owned his own farm clear of debt and that his wife and grown sons could work it meant that the family held together and avoided starvation through his twelve years in prison. His absence was not without cost, as Shaw discovered when he returned and tried to reestablish his paternal authority over his sons. In his absence the sons, like Nate in his own youth, had developed a stronger sense of their own competence than they could authentically suppress. Nevertheless, the relative security of landownership surely made Shaw's forthright resistance more thinkable, even if not cost-free.¹¹

For other families the fruits of freedom came in upward mobility. Pauli Murray, in her autobiography, *Proud Shoes*, dwells on the pride her grandparents, both born slaves in North Carolina, felt in two daughters who became successful public school teachers. Murray herself earned distinction as a civil rights lawyer and as one of the earliest female priests in the Episcopal church.¹² The historian of the McGhee-Hicks clan of

Granville County, which includes some 1,500 descendants of the union of two former slaves, declined to specify each “doctor, lawyer, judge, teacher, preacher, professor, craftsman or whatever, among Caroline’s and Robert’s descendants,” pleading that “with a family this large someone’s title would be omitted for sure.” She noted only that most had been forced off the land after 1900, the remainder during the Great Depression, and that despite the unabating struggles the family claimed members “engaged in every imaginable occupation from the most humble to high offices of the U.S. Government.”¹³ Both social mobility and political resistance were dreamed of on the benches of black-run schools, inspired by sermons in black-run churches, and nourished in the soils of black-owned farms.

Reconstruction and the years of tenancy neither entirely vitiated nor fulfilled the freedpeople’s jubilee hopes for emancipation. But, given that northern whites had no staying power and southern whites no stomach for the work, insofar as emancipation became freedom at all it did so at the hands of the freedpeople. The interesting question is, as the freedpeople made freedom, what priorities guided their design and what is the legacy of the kind of freedom that they sought to make?

Several recurring desiderata emerge from freedpeople’s lives, credit relations, and institutional development. Whenever they could, freedpeople chose to learn and to lead. The years between 1864 and 1868 saw a veritable explosion of black social creativity. Schools and churches, social clubs, orphanages and relief societies blossomed in black communities. Freedpeople had to be beaten back from schooling; their desire to learn could only be diminished by the concerted and continuous effects of abandonment, neglect, condescension, and violence. And even in the face of such assaults, primary, secondary, and collegiate institutions grew, surviving to support the black leadership of the twentieth century.

Freedpeople showed a keen sense of the need for alliances, maintaining relationships with northern blacks and with northern and southern whites, despite differences, betrayals, and undisguised malice. Some alliances brought influence, some brought protection, some brought resources. Some grew out of proximity, others out of shared interest.

Throughout the period, if a good and worthwhile task was at hand, whether it be the election of a good man to office or the erection of a good school for the children, freedpeople were willing to join with others to make it happen.

Hand in hand with the alliances went the commitment to work. Farming, cooking, trading, building, chopping, foraging, hunting, turpentineing, railroading, nursing, midwifing, raising chicks and pigs, milking and churning, baking and feeding, the work never stopped. They worked for themselves and for their families; they worked to pay out and they worked to build up. They worked to escape and they worked to stay. And most were willing to do whatever need demanded and talent allowed.

The nation needed a new recipe for freedom after the Civil War. If Reconstruction would be an unfinished revolution, how much more so had been the eighteenth-century revolution, when the republic committed itself to “an attempt to support freedom with slavery.”¹⁴ Every aspect of American ideas of freedom, from the loathing of dependence to the ravaging of the land took some of its force from the ambiguity of building the republic’s foundation on chattel slavery. The abolition of slavery just as surely abolished this constricted freedom.

Having “allowed [slaveholders] to compose the documents that founded [the] republic, and chose[n] [slaveholders] to chart its course for a generation,” America did need, in Abraham Lincoln’s words, a new birth of freedom.¹⁵ Many new definitions were in fact offered: the freedom to labor, the freedom to profiteer, the freedom to homestead. Freedom to own a home and mow a lawn and retreat from civic life, the so-called American dream, has come later, but, like the others, this latest one is just a proposal we have tried in the ongoing search to give the republic an authentic freedom on which to stand.

The freedpeople offered their definition too. They had thought about freedom for generations before the idea began to intrigue the eighteenth-century Whigs, and they went on thinking about it for a century more before they had the chance to give their ideas life. In the end, they came up with a very appealing vision for a democracy: productive work using all available talents, guided by a commitment to per-

CONCLUSION

manence, strengthened by the willingness to cooperate with others despite great and painful differences, and crowned with the desire to build leadership upon understanding and experience. We could do—indeed we have done—much worse. Perhaps the opportunity to seize this vision has not been altogether lost.

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Notes

ABBREVIATIONS

AMA Letters	American Missionary Association Letters
NCC	North Caroliniana Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Senate Report 693	U.S. Congress, 46th Congress, 2nd Session, "Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the Causes Which Have Led to the Emigration of Negroes from the Southern to the Northern States."
SPI Reports	Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, North Carolina State Library, Raleigh

INTRODUCTION

1. Some highlights of the last generation of scholarship on this subject include, for the eighteenth century, Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*; Smith, "Lower Sort"; White, *Somewhat More Independent*. For the antebellum years, see Hudson, *Working Toward Freedom*; Webber, *Deep Like the Rivers*; Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*; and Vlach, *Back of the Big House*. For the postwar years see Foner, *Reconstruction*; Painter, *Exodusters*; Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*. For research that spans several periods see Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*; Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*; Lemann, *Promised Land*; Bethel, *Promiseland*; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*; Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*.

2. Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, 44–45.

3. North Carolina Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Report, 1887, "Landlord Views," 97, NCC.

4. See among others, Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*; Osterud, *Bonds of*

Community; Jacqueline Jones also notes the similarity of black household behavior to that in “‘traditional’ rural society” in her *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 68. In my opinion, though, she attributes more to rural location than is warranted. See also for earlier and later periods, Ulrich, *Good Wives*; Cowan, *More Work for Mother*.

5. For discussions of economic production under slavery see “Slaves’ Economy.” See also Lichtenstein, “That Disposition to Theft”; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*; and Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, as well as Rawick, *American Slave*.

6. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 94.

7. See Holt, “Symbol, Memory, and Service,” esp. 203–4, for the ambiguity of household production.

8. See McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

9. See for example, Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism*; Flynt, *Dixie’s Forgotten People*.

10. Holt, “Symbol, Memory, and Service,” 205.

11. The situation of antebellum *landless* whites may resemble that of the freed-people more than that of their white yeoman contemporaries. Landless whites seem to have faced similar exactions and persistent casual disregard of their formal independence from slaveholders before the war, and their household production may have had similar political content. See Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 24–26, 42.

12. Holt, “Time to Plant,” 217–19. Black landowners are hard to track accurately using only the once-a-decade census tally. The variable fortunes of freed-people, who might gain and lose land within one census interval, together with the census takers’ policy of recording as tenants those farmers who both owned and rented, means that estimates of black landownership based solely on the census are certainly too low. For extensive discussion and illustration of this problem, see chapter 3 of this book.

13. Though Granville was not part of the Second Congressional District, known colloquially as “The Black Second,” blacks were powerful enough in county politics to provoke the state, under Governor Zebulon Vance, to annex three of the most heavily black townships, Henderson, Kittrell, and Townesville, to form Vance County in 1881, shifting the balance of population in favor of Granville’s white inhabitants. See Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina*, ch. 1; and Peace, “*Zeb’s Black Baby*.”

14. There are in fact several studies of Granville that have been done in recent

years, including Bynum's *Unruly Women*, and Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion*.

15. Daniel, *Breaking the Land*, 23–31.

16. Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers*, ch. 2.

17. Stansell, *City of Women*, introduction and ch. 1.

18. Liu, *Weaver's Knot*; Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism*, chs. 2–4. See also Hareven and Langenbach, *Amoskeag*, for similar relationship of household production to the capitalization of industry in nineteenth-century New Hampshire.

19. Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place*. See also, for earlier European immigrant groups following the same pattern, U.S. Senate, *Reports of the Immigration Commission*.

20. Studies of peasant economies caught in industrialization suggest parallels with the situation of freedpeople, notably peasants' sharply reduced economic options, their desire to control the allocation of their labor, and their willingness to do almost anything to keep their farms. See Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound*; Rudolph, "Agricultural Structure and Proto-Industrialization in Russia"; Worrell, "Dual Economy Since Lewis"; Peal, "Purposeful Peasants?"

21. For the Sanford household see United States Census Bureau, 10th Census of Population, 1880, 107/2/3; for the Lee household see Population Census, 1880, 107/2/76, and 10th Census, 1880, Schedule of Agriculture, 107/2/32, all for Granville County, North Carolina.

22. The 1880 census was designed to represent households as having only one pivotal member, in this case Thomas Sanford, with all property and human relations devolving from him. One can wonder whether Sanford knew of the Lees' own household and chose to claim them as his dependents anyway, or whether he simply did not know he was making an error. He and Butler followed the official instructions in failing to record the relationship between the Lees, but their instructions, while absolving Sanford and Butler personally for that omission, only make explicit the fact that, in the society that Sanford and Butler represented, the private lives of dependent persons, including black servants, could safely be disregarded.

23. The Lees' marriage seems to have been long and devoted. Nancy Lee survived Ottawa by many years, but when she died she stipulated in her will that her burial expenses should not exceed thirty-five dollars, as "my beloved husband Ottawa Lee's funeral expenses was thirty-five Dollars (\$35.00) and I do not wish for mine to exceed his." Wills, probated October 12, 1920, Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, North Carolina.

I. AN ESCAPE CLAUSE

1. Tenancy is meant here in its broadest sense, including tenancy by shares of the crop, by cash, and by mixtures of those two forms of payment.

2. The debates in southern economic history have revolved around the process whereby the tenant and sharecropping system was established. Labor and economic historians have argued for some years about whether the system represented an economically rational response to the financial crises of defeat and emancipation, or whether it was engrafted on the South as a form of social control despite its known economic liabilities. See among others, Higgs, *Competition and Coercion*; Kousser and McPherson, *Region, Race and Reconstruction*; Wright *Old South, New South*.

3. The terms “household economy,” “household production,” “family economy,” and “home-based economy” are used here interchangeably.

4. North Carolina slave narratives offer abundant evidence that under slavery many masters had “given” gardens to their slaves and assumed that the slaves would largely feed themselves, saving the master that expense. The small rations provided for slave children also suggest that families somehow had to feed their children until they were old enough to work and draw rations. For the importance of gardens for tenants on a South Carolina plantation, see Orser, *Material Basis of the Postbellum Tenant Plantation*, 89 and 92.

5. Secrecy was, of course, not new to the postbellum world; it had deep roots in the years of enslavement. Slaves were careful to conceal not only such illegal and punishable enterprises as religious worship, the harboring of fugitives, and private disposal of crops but also to hide as much as they could of their private lives and personal thoughts. Concealment provided protection for slave life, inhibiting the ability of slave masters to overwhelm the slaves’ individual and collective dignity. See Webber, *Deep Like the Rivers*, passim, esp. 102–10 and 191–206.

6. For testimony from landlords about the prevalence of payment in goods, see North Carolina Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Annual Reports*, especially sections entitled “Landlord Returns” and “Landlord Views,” NCC. See also for payment in store credits, Clark, *Pills, Petticoat, and Plows*, 78–89. See also, as examples, several typical labor contracts:

This is to certify that I Anthony, formerly a servant of John Ramsay have bargain and agreed to work on the farm or elsewhere for said John Ramsay from this date to the twenty fifth day of December 1865 and obey him in every respect as heretofore. And the said John Ramsay promises to pay the

said Anthony three and one half barrels of corn and one hundred pounds of pork beside his rations. The said Anthony is to furnish his own clothes, pay his own Doctor's bills and taxes All time lost by said Anthony is to be deducted from said Anthony's wages at the rate of twenty five cents per day. Given under our hands and seals this 12th June 1865. (John Ramsay [d. 1882] Papers, 1859–1884 and Undated, from Seaboard, Northampton County, North Carolina.)

This agreement made and entered into on this the 24th of December 1880 between John C. Van Hook and Thomas Long, Col, witnesseth said Thom. Long agrees to hire to said Van Hook his Brother Bob Long to work in the farm for the year 1881 and is to receive the sum of Twenty dollars a good summer suit of clothes and a good winter suit & hat & pr winter shoes. Said Van Hook is to make Bob work by his directions & correct him when it is necessary—all lost time from sickness or other causes to be taken from his wages. Given under our hand and seal. (John C. Van Hook Papers, 1865–1882 and Undated, Roxboro, Person County, North Carolina.)

This agreement made and entered into between John C. Van Hook of the first part & Joe Van Hook (colerd) Witnesseth that the said John C. Van Hook agrees to pay the said Joe Van Hook (col) the sum of sixty dollars for the year 1873 (from this day till 25 Dec. inclusive) for his services as a laborer. The said Joe Van Hook agrees on his part to work faithful and be in place at all times, not to absent himself from his work or other duties required of him without permission, for violations of said contract Joe Van Hook forfeits any wages that may be due him. Witness, our hands and seals this 10th December 1872. (John C. Van Hook Papers, 1865–1882 and Undated, Roxboro, Person County, North Carolina.)

All of these documents are in Special Collections, Duke University.

7. Edward L. Blackwell, Ledger, 1869–1873, and Ledger for Negro Custom-ers, 1869–1871, Fairfield, Hyde County, North Carolina; and John C. Van Hook, Account Book, 1865–1882, all in Special Collections, Duke University.

8. Account Book of Thomas Lenoir, 1867–1872, Special Collections, Duke University.

9. See Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 218–22, on men's practice of recording exchanges of labor in cash terms, though no cash is exchanged.

10. See, for example, Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, p. 305 and supp. 1,

vol. 1, pp. 11–12. Nate Shaw, an early twentieth-century Alabama cotton farmer, worked where his father assigned him and allowed his father to appropriate all his wages until he was twenty-one. Shaw resented the arrangement, but more because his father squandered the money and failed to provide for the family than because Shaw felt himself entitled to the wages as his own. See Rosen-garten, *All God's Dangers*, part 1, esp. pp. 75–92.

11. Senate Report 693. This report contains testimony taken by a Senate committee formed to investigate the exodus of blacks from North Carolina to Indiana in 1878 and 1879. Senate Democrats, in the majority on the committee, contended that the exodus was masterminded by the Republicans in order to swing the state of Indiana into the Republican column for the 1880 presidential race. Republicans, for their part, accused the Democrats of using the charge of political machinations as a ploy to sidestep responsibility for the desperate condition of North Carolina's black populace. Witnesses were carefully chosen and screened by the Democratic majority, and questions from each side reflected the political argument involved. Nevertheless, some information on black life in the Tar Heel State of the 1870s leaks out between the lines.

12. Elizabeth (Johnson) Harris, "Memoir," 8–11, Special Collections, Duke University.

13. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 15, p. 263.

14. Foner, *Nothing but Freedom*, 16–18.

15. Wayne, *Reshaping of Plantation Society*, 48–49.

16. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 201.

17. White, *In Search of Kith and Kin*, 52–53. Robert Pool's mother had been forcibly separated from his father by sale before emancipation; by emancipation he was remarried and she was the widow of her second husband.

18. John Michael Vlach writes of a former slave facing eviction early in the twentieth century from the plantation where he had lived all his life. He objected to his landlord that "De strength of dese arms and dese legs and of dis old back . . . is in your rice banks . . . An' de rest of dis body want to be with de strength of de arms and de legs and de back dat is already buried in your rice banks. No . . . you ain't agoin' to run old Morris off dis place." *Back of the Big House*, 15–16.

19. Lucy Haskell to George Whipple, December 30, 1865, AMA Letters. Abandonment of the elderly occurred during slavery, too, as Frederick Douglass bitterly attests in the case of his grandmother. See Douglass, *Narrative*, 65–66.

20. Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 57.

21. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, p. 54.

22. Ibid., 131, 408.

23. Nancy Bass was probably free before the war. The Bass family figured prominently in Granville County's large free black population, which dated back into the eighteenth century. Author's conversation with Barnetta McGhee White, January 1991.

24. Population Census, 1880, 102/2/46; Agricultural Census, 1880, 102/2/27, Granville County, North Carolina. See also, Bethel, *Promiseland*, 43, for a discussion of three-generation households. Bethel notes that households with many young children would not take in helpless or dependent elders if homes with other family members could be found. But it is hard to know just what "helpless" might mean in these homes. One freedman, discovered by AMA missionary Lucy Haskell in Wilmington, North Carolina, talked to Haskell while he scrubbed at the washtub to help his wife. Earlier that morning he and his children had been out in the woods collecting a load of firewood. He was completely blind—but far from helpless. See Lucy Haskell to George Whipple, December 30, 1865, AMA Letters.

25. As Elizabeth Rauh Bethel points out in her study of Promised Land, South Carolina, even maintenance work like cooking and laundry could have measurable benefits for productivity. Clean, mended, warm clothing and preserved vegetables to eat through the winter made a family healthier, which meant that family members could work longer hours and more years. To people who lived perpetually on the margin and who depended for their productivity largely on their own physical strength, sound health and good nutrition could make a major difference in economic well-being. See *Promiseland*, 47.

26. Charles Bolton argues that landless antebellum white men faced similar pressures from slaveowners/employers to provide the labor of their wives and children without extra compensation. See *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, 31.

27. Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, 44–45.

28. Different historians have proposed these reasons. See Jones, *Labor of Love*, ch. 2, p. 59, n. 40. See also Foner, *Reconstruction*, 86.

29. See for example, John O. Kelly of Raleigh and W. W. Arrington of Nash County, Senate Report 693, vol. 7, pp. 250 and 252, respectively.

30. Edward L. Blackwell, Ledger for Negro Customers, 1869–1871, Fairfield, Hyde County, North Carolina, Special Collections, Duke University.

31. For how this process worked in the colonial and early national city, see Boydston, *Home and Work*.

32. Jones, *Labor of Love*, 71–72.

33. *Ibid.*, 59.

34. Graham, “From Slavery to Serfdom,” 128.

35. Senate Report 693, February 6, 1880, 252.

36. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 15, pp. 353–54.

37. Nursing work probably took Mrs. Thornton out of her own home and into the homes of her clients for extended stays, which could have been a source of disruption for the lives of the couple.

38. *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 8, 1928, NCC, Clippings File.

39. Senate Report 693, February 6, 1880, 256.

40. Rufus W. Wharton, Manuscript Ledger, 1889–1903, in David Carter Miller Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. In 1889, Caroline May worked twenty-four days as a half-hand; Caroline Clark, twenty-three days as a half-hand, Nicy Clark and Mary Ann Clark Bryan, as quarter-hands for forty-one days together. If full-hands were paid at 50¢ per day, multiplying the days by one-half and one-quarter, respectively, brings the total income to \$6.00 for Caroline May and \$11.08 for the Clark/Bryan clan.

41. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, p. 221.

42. Senate Report 693, February 18, 1880, 397.

43. Peter and Sylvia May were seventy-eight and seventy in 1880 and lived with their older son, Peter Jr. They appear to have died before Rufus Wharton’s ledger begins in 1889. See Population Census, 1880, 7/1/36, Beaufort County, North Carolina.

44. The urgency of bringing in the crop did not override what seems to have been a desire to protect the young girls picking out in the field. The May women worked in teams that always included at least one older person to supervise and protect the younger girls. Throughout the harvest of 1890, for example, when Caroline and Key May, aged nineteen and seventeen, respectively, picked almost seven thousand pounds of cotton between them, they had the company of their Aunt Amanda and at least one of her young daughters in the fields nearly every day. On the few days that Amanda was not picking, her daughters picked with their older cousins. At no point were the younger May girls in the fields without the presence of an older relation.

45. The ledger continues from 1889 to 1903, though the reckonings for 1896 were not usable. In the fourteen remaining years, on average 33 percent of the family crop was picked on Saturday. In two years, Saturday picking in the Wharton crop amounted to 6 percent of the total; in all other years there was no picking whatever in Wharton’s fields on Saturday. Family crop picking on Saturdays dropped sharply each year after the Wharton crop had been brought in, con-

firming the argument that Saturday picking was a strategy designed to meet multiple obligations, not a choice about labor allocation pure and simple.

46. Senate Report 693, February 6, 1880, 252.

47. Ibid., February 18, 1880, 397.

48. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 15, pp. 240–41.

49. Elizabeth (Johnson) Harris, “Memoir,” 8–11, Special Collections, Duke University.

50. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, pp. 298–99.

2. SPLIT RAILS AND A SORREL HORSE: MANAGING DEBT THROUGH HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION

1. Elizabeth Cohen makes a persuasive argument, though concerning a totally different group of African Americans, that blacks preferred to shop in chain stores when they appeared in the twentieth century because the clearly marked prices protected them from racially motivated fraud at the hands of white merchants. See “Encountering Mass Culture at the Grass Roots.”

2. Race is not routinely specified on the lien forms in Granville County, though the records generally observe a convention of referring to white men by their initials and black men by their full names, and the race of many parties to lien agreements can be identified from other sources. Crandall A. Shifflett found something similar in records in Louisa County, Virginia. He notes that “a small but important clue to racial identity proved to be the absence of middle initials in names. Nearly all of the cases of missing initials turned out to be black Louisians.” See *Patronage and Poverty in the Tobacco South*, 107. A thorough study of these orthographic patterns might have a lot to teach us about the relationship between naming and power in American history.

3. Agricultural Liens and Chattel Mortgages, Granville County, North Carolina, Book 23, 321 (Curtis), 71 (Wilder), 281 (Nance), 291 (Allen), in the Office of the Register of Deeds, Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, North Carolina.

4. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 409.

5. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 409. For lengthy treatment of the experiences of white farmers with debt, see Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism*, and Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South*, esp. part 2. For a discussion of the defensive uses of women’s home production among antebellum white yeomen, see McCurry, “Politics of Yeoman Households in Antebellum South Carolina.”

6. Steven Hahn points out that postbellum merchant creditors differed crucially from their antebellum counterparts in that, after the war, creditors had to

borrow their capital from the North, and thus they charged interest against their debtors from the moment of borrowing. Before the war, borrowing from the merchant carried interest only if it was not repaid as agreed. See *Roots of Southern Populism*, 181.

7. Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 316.

8. *Ibid.*, 317.

9. S. M. Evans and Company, Satterwhite, North Carolina, Ledger, General Merchandise, vol. 1, 1881–1885; vol. 2, 1885–1889, in the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

10. Evans and Company, Ledger, vol. 1, p. 9; vol. 2, pp. 86, 165.

11. Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 317.

12. Evans and Company, Ledger, vol. 2, pp. 16, 92 (Knott); 34 (Thornton); 37 (Sandford); 33 (Wilkerson); and 20 (Dockett). These traders were all freedmen. Edward Blackwell's debtors Tony Carter and Irvin Sanderson, among others, likewise paid off with labor, one doing day work, the other offering the labor of his son alongside his own. See Edward L. Blackwell account book, January 1870 and December 1869, Special Collections, Duke University.

13. Graham, "From Slavery to Serfdom," 120.

14. Later on, merchants maintained their position in the community by installing the first phones and providing the money orders needed to shop from the Sears catalog. In the early twentieth century, they tried to monopolize the car repair and gasoline trades. Thomas Clark credits their failure to lock in the car trade as the beginning of their general decline. See *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 71, for seeds; 86 and 136, for mediating home production; 201 and 207, for outwork; 173, for school supplies; 97–98, for money orders; 101, for phones; 295, for the car trade.

15. *Ibid.*, chs. 3 and 8.

16. The records also give the impression, though it is far from systematic, that black farmers could expect to mortgage more property than whites for comparable loans. For a discussion of this, see Holt, "Time to Plant," 162–64.

17. The information in this table was compiled from a random sample of annual liens and chattel mortgages, not controlling for the race of either creditor or mortgagee. The point is to demonstrate the structural differences between the two credit instruments, not their differential use by black farmers.

18. Language printed on the lien form, see for example Agricultural Liens and Chattel Mortgages, Granville County, North Carolina, book 26, in the Office of the Register of Deeds, Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, North Carolina.

19. Ibid., book 40, pp. 79 and 82.

20. Language printed on the lien form. See for example, *ibid.*, book 30.

21. Ibid., book 40, pp. 53 (bond), 78 and 58 (livestock), 83 and 72 (buggy), 75 (settle debt), 90 and 217 (carry over debt), 107 (buy medicine), 293 (buy machinery), 305 (bicycle and cart), 58 and 78 and book 35, p. 517 (installment payments).

22. Ibid., book 40, p. 337.

23. Patterns of pawning and redeeming goods among the antebellum urban poor of New York City conform to and differ from freedpeople's use of chattel mortgages in interesting ways. Like rural households, urban families pawned what they could spare, but their pawning had seasonal and weekly rhythms. Sunday clothes could be pawned on Monday, allowing the family to live all week on the proceeds and redeem the clothes with payday wages on Saturday. Likewise, families would pawn shoes in the summer and redeem them in the winter. Most of the pawning in New York was negotiated by women, unlike the male predominance at the rural store. Urban households were far more loathe to part with luxury items, which they viewed as "treasures of respectability," but they were like rural farmers in their reluctance to part with pots, pans, and bedding, which were hard to do without and very costly to replace. See Stansell, *City of Women*, 51.

24. Senate Report 693, January 23, 1880, 56.

25. In 1885, for example, Robert T. Thorp took a very large mortgage of \$120, for which he gave as security "One Bay Horse named John Gibbons, one red spotted cow & my share of the crop of tobacco made this year at Abraham Evans suppose to be one thousand pounds." Though such a large mortgage probably left Thorp very much at the mercy of his creditor to define adequate collateral, Thorp still took care to specify the extent of risks to his crop, and offered only crops that he had already harvested.

Jesse Mangum, another large debtor, specified the terms of his chattel mortgage that year even more exactly. For his debt of \$111.14, he offered as collateral several cows and calves, a featherbed and quilt, his farming tools and "3 Bbls corn and 1 stack fodder and 500 lbs. of leaf tobacco." Household items like the featherbed appear only rarely in the chattel mortgage records. Mangum's featherbed was probably as much a luxury as a necessity, since most households made do with bed ticks made of straw or corn shucks. Mangum could be justified in including the featherbed, an item of particular value, in his list.

26. Crandall Shifflett suggests that in Louisa County, Virginia, household fur-

nishings were among the most valuable items freedpeople owned, sometimes the largest component of a household's net worth, ahead of livestock and draft animals. He notes that he is referring to taxable value, which may be considerably higher than mortgageable value. In any case, Granville County tax lists do not show such a high value in household goods at any time between 1865 and 1898. See Shifflett, "Shadowed Thresholds," 127–28.

27. Population Census, 1880, 107/2/37; and Tax Lists, 1872, 1876, Granville County, North Carolina.

28. Agricultural Liens and Chattel Mortgages, Granville County, North Carolina, book 27, p. 129, in the Office of the Register of Deeds, Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, North Carolina.

29. Tax assessors allowed each family twenty-five dollars of tax-free personal property. Taxes were levied only on the value of goods over twenty-five dollars. Thus the Norwoods may have retained some farm equipment and household furnishings, despite the disappearance of taxable goods. The possibility that they still had some goods does not, however, negate the importance of the decline in their fortunes.

30. Agricultural Liens and Chattel Mortgages, Granville County, North Carolina, book 23, p. 58, in the Office of the Register of Deeds, Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, North Carolina.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 322.

3. THE NEW NORTH STAR: THE QUEST FOR A FARM

1. Mobley, *James City*, 81–84. The dispossession of James City farmers followed the resolution in 1891 of a protracted legal battle during which the land was sold and resold. The courts finally vested legal title to the land in its antebellum owners, thereby making legally enforceable the deeds held by the most recent purchasers, James and Mary Bryan. The Bryans inaugurated the eviction procedure in 1891. See pp. 76–79.

2. Senate Report 693, January 23, 1880, 113.

3. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1880, 49–50, 112–13.

4. Wright, *Old South, New South*, vii.

5. Mobley, *James City*, chs. 1 and 2.

6. *Ibid.*, 43.

7. Most of the residents of James City moved together and created a new settlement, also called James City, just south of the old one. Recently, they

had to organize to prevent the destruction of the old freedpeople's burial ground when the New Bern airport decided to build a new runway. See Phelps, *Archaeological-Historical Study of the Bryan Cemetery*. Note that the history of how this survey was accomplished is in dispute. The narrative given in this publication seems unfairly to attack the first archaeological research team. Author's conversation with Kenneth Brown, April 1993.

8. Kenzer, "Methods by Which Blacks Acquired Land in the Postwar South," 4.

9. Bethel, *Promiseland*, 20–21.

10. *Ibid.*, 191.

11. Elizabeth (Johnson) Harris, "Memoir," 9, Special Collections, Duke University.

12. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*, 10–11. On p. 11, Kenzer notes that occasionally land was legally transferred to free-born blacks by white men who had served as their trustees. Where it was illegal for blacks to own land, a white agent might have held the land on the black owner's behalf.

13. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 15, p. 263.

14. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*, 10.

15. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, pp. 289–90.

16. Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, 86–87.

17. Freeman had, by working and abstaining from liquor and tobacco, saved up a grub stake of \$47.75. This he put toward an education at Shaw University. He trained as a teacher and taught for forty-three years in the public schools. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, p. 320.

18. Two notable exceptions to the generally cursory treatment of black landowning are Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*, and Schweninger, *Black Property Owners*.

19. See Schweninger, *Black Property Owners*, esp. ch. 5.

20. Not all landowners were male, by any means, but by far the preponderance were. The censuses provide figures on the number of black males age twenty-one and over, by county. Those figures for Granville County are in 1870, 5,057; in 1880, 6,574; and in 1890 (after the annexation of three townships to create neighboring Vance County), 2,268.

21. Thomas Boston, "Capitalist Development and Afro-American Land Tenancy," affirms also that black landowning rose between 1874 and 1880, and that black landowning is underreported in the federal census.

22. For the Harris family see Population Census, 1880, 102/2/36; and Agri-

cultural Census, 1880, 102/2/21; and see James Harris Sr. in Tax Lists, Tally Ho township, 1879 and 1881, all Granville County, North Carolina.

23. For the Bass family see Population Census, 1880, 107/2/9 and Tax Lists, Oxford township, 1879 and 1881, Granville County, North Carolina.

24. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, p. 224. It is interesting that Charles Dalton described the land and the house as his, using the first-person singular, that he bought and he built, but that then he mentions his wife, Ellen, and moves to the first-person plural to describe the gardening and livestock operations. Locutions like this abound in the slave narratives and other sources, and confirm the general picture of how labor and responsibility were apportioned within freedpeople's households.

25. The Dalton family did not reside in Granville County and so does not appear in the census and tax record research for this study.

26. Property designated by the enumerator as a "town lot" lay within the boundaries of a township's major hamlet. Its "town" location, though, does not preclude the land's being used as a farm. Granville County's towns were little more than rural crossroads. Henderson and Oxford, the county's two largest towns, had populations of 1,421 and 1,349 people respectively in 1880. The hub of Kittrell township claimed only 600 souls. Farming could and did take place on the outskirts of these villages. Freedpeople often cultivated "farms" smaller than one- or two-acre "town lots." Therefore, the presence of farm animals even on land denoted a "town lot" is taken here as an indication of farming activity.

I counted farmers as follows: for the census, I counted each person marked in the agricultural census as an owner; for the tax list, I counted each person paying taxes on nontown acreage. The third figure, also drawn from the tax lists, includes all those paying taxes on nontown acreage *and* all those who owned sufficient livestock to indicate a farming interest but whose land fell technically within the border of a "town."

27. Edward Bonekemper found similar discrepancies between the 1870 census and county land records in Elizabeth City County, Virginia. See Bonekemper, "Negro Ownership of Real Property," 175.

28. Agricultural Census, 1880, 107/2/23; Tax Lists, esp. 1884, 1890, 1891–1898, Granville County, North Carolina, Oxford township. It is unfortunate not to have the 1890 manuscript census records in order to confirm Burt's status.

29. Record of Mortgages, Granville County, North Carolina, vol. 34, 1890–1893, pp. 10, 126, 307.

30. The records still extant are for 1867, 1872, 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1881, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1894, 1895, 1896, and 1898. I have used eighteen of these years, excluding 1876, since it is available for only one township, and 1887, since it is too faded to be read reliably. I have also excluded 1867. The tax list of 1867 makes no systematic distinction by race, so finding freedpeople in 1867 depends upon tracing them backwards from 1872. In 1867 Granville County had nineteen tax districts. The new constitution of 1868 created eleven townships, with different boundaries than the old districts had had. The 1872 list is organized by the new townships, making it immensely time-consuming to make even unreliable connections between persons listed in 1872 and 1867.

All of the available information has been collected on all African American people who owned land at any point and for any length of time between 1872 and 1898. I have tracked their property holding patterns before, during, and after they became landowners. That information has been combined with a variety of material on mortgages and liens, neighbors, mobility, family connections, and church membership, culled from other sources.

31. Former slaves often took their former masters' surnames. Thus, Flora's husband, Frank, was most likely Frank Walton, and her mother (who was never legally allowed to marry) could have had the same surname.

32. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, pp. 377–78.

33. *Ibid.*, 378.

34. Senate Report 693, January 23, 1880, 54.

35. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, p. 305.

36. These figures are averages based on the number of cows and pounds of butter produced on those Granville County farms that produced any butter at all. Farms with cows that produced no butter are not counted in this average. 10th Census of Agriculture, 1880, Granville County, North Carolina.

37. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, p. 305.

38. *Ibid.*, 289.

39. Amos and Minnie Long, elderly former slaves, provided perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the importance of hogs to the well-being of a family, though in their case, a family sinking into destitution rather than moving toward farm ownership. When they spoke to a Federal Writers Project interviewer in 1937, the Longs were old and sick. Their one horse had died early that year, leaving them unable to make a crop for the first time in many seasons. Amos Long made brooms and caned chairs to try to pay their rent, and Minnie

summed up all they had left. “We’ve got one hog to kill, but all our chickens died. They’s no cow on the place, no collards nor turnips; the few sweet potatoes we got had to be tended with the hoe.” Their plow horse had been the key to the Longs’ productivity. Now only a hog and a few sweet potatoes stood between them and utter destitution. Rawick, *American Slave*, supp. 1, vol. 11, pp. 28–32. Also in NCC, Federal Writers Project, box 19, folder 219, no. 179.

40. According to 1880 agricultural census records, approximately 85 to 90 percent of Granville County black farmers, of all tenure types, kept chickens.

41. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 15, p. 341.

42. Ibid., vol. 14, pp. 5, 77, 84, 267, 289, 460; vol. 15, p. 240; supp. 1, vol. 11, p. 29.

43. Well into the twentieth century, agricultural extension agents encouraged even tenant farmers to keep a cow if possible. Pigs were encouraged because they needed little space, but “even tenant farmers found dairying a way of earning small amounts of cash.” See Crosby, “Limited Success Against Long Odds.”

44. Senate Report 693, February 6, 1880, 246.

45. Ibid., 258.

46. Tax Lists, Fishing Creek township (for Cogwells) and Oxford township (for Hunts). For proximity of Hunt brothers to each other see Population Census, 1880, 107/2/36, and Agricultural Census, 107/2/8, all Granville County, North Carolina.

47. Among Granville County black landholders, of the forty-four who moved once, 77 percent had at least one connection to church or local kin. Forty-one percent had between two and four such connections. Of the small number who moved twice (five), 40 percent had no connection at all, 20 percent had one, and 40 percent had two. Documenting connections with kin and community is, of course, extremely difficult and fraught with hazy or merely probable linkages. In addition, the absolute numbers are so small that percentages mean little. But the relationships among personal networks, geographic mobility, and landownership deserve some investigation.

48. Figures calculated by the author from Granville County tax lists.

49. Bethel, *Promiseland*, 223–25.

50. Senate Report 693, February 6, 1880, 254.

51. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 14, p. 221.

52. Senate Report 693, February 6, 1880, 263.

53. Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, 140.

54. Another 13 percent of repeat purchasers were not accumulators as such.

Rather, they were trying to purchase entirely new farms after having lost acreage they had bought earlier.

55. Tax Lists, Granville County, North Carolina, Fishing Creek and Oxford townships, 1872–1898.

56. Ibid.

57. Crosby, “Limited Success Against Long Odds,” 282. These agents were state-sponsored, and pre-dated the federal county agent program. The quote is from the first decade of the twentieth century.

58. Clark, *Pills, Petticoats and Plows*, 321–22.

59. Flynt, *Dixie’s Forgotten People*, 60–61. Brown, *Up Before Daylight*, 33–34, for the importance of ownership; 44, for aversion to credit.

60. For the Grandy farm see Population Census, 1880, 108/2/2; Agricultural Census, 1880, 108/2/2; and Tax Lists, 1879–1880, Granville County, North Carolina, Fishing Creek township, 1872–1898.

61. Ransom and Sutch have noted that black farmers tended to hold a higher percentage of their overall wealth in movable goods than in land, in contrast to their white counterparts. They cite this disproportion as evidence of discrimination against blacks in the purchase of farms. See *One Kind of Freedom*, 83–85. Granville County provides the same kind of evidence of discrimination in several townships. However, it is important also to realize that movable goods played a major role in the solvency and economic flexibility of black farmers as they played the credit game and tried to protect their real estate from seizure.

62. The detailed breakdown is only available for the years shown. In other years, goods and animals were valued together in one lump sum, recorded as “Personal Property.”

63. The numbers are, for 1891, 219 owners of goods among 406 farmers, and for 1894, 164 owners of goods among 451 farmers. Household goods were taxed when their value rose above a twenty-five-dollar minimum, so the absence of taxable goods does not necessarily denote the absence of any movable goods at all.

64. Bethel, *Promiseland*, 102–3.

65. Land Deeds, book 28, pp. 375, 378; book 29, pp. 320, 313; book 40, p. 345; Agricultural Liens and Chattel Mortgages, book 22, p. 20, Granville County, North Carolina.

66. Judgment Docket, book 3, p. 186, January 30, 1888, Granville County, North Carolina.

67. Tax Lists, Tally Ho township, 1881–1898; Land Deeds, book 28, pp. 375,

378; book 29, pp. 313, 320; book 40, p. 345, for Marcus Tilly; and book 53, p. 571, for Hugh Tilly, Granville County, North Carolina.

68. Agricultural Liens and Chattel Mortgages, book 52, pp. 109, 126, 284; and Wills, book 27, p. 58, probated July 23, 1921, Granville County, North Carolina.

69. Tax List, Brassfield township, 1877, and Agricultural Census, 1880, 100/2/3, Granville County, North Carolina. The 1880 population census (100/2/3) lists Ann Atkins with six children, including two sons, George and Benjamin, who never appear in the tax list. Six-year-old Benjamin was ill when the census taker visited. He and his brother George may have died before their mother apportioned her holdings among her children in 1891.

70. See Population Census, Granville County, North Carolina, 1880, 100/2/3; see also Clark, *Pills, Petticoats and Plows*, for discussion of items commonly purchased at southern general stores, 314–16.

71. Bethel, *Promiseland*, 62–63, 103–7. It is interesting to note that colonial New Englanders used this practice of settling children in advance of deeding them control of the land as well. For the New Englanders, this was a way to assure the continued authority of fathers over children as they reached adulthood; whatever of this Ann Atkins may have designed to achieve, for her it was also a strategy to overcome obstacles to the safe transmission of her estate to her heirs. See Greven, *Four Generations*.

72. Marriage bond, dated December 23, 1893, between John Eaton and Mary Atkins, Vital Records, Marriage Bonds, Granville County, North Carolina.

73. Elizabeth Rauh Bethel detects similar purposes in land devising among nineteenth-century black landholders in *Promised Land*, South Carolina. She notes fathers who used “a portion of [their] land as dowries for [their] daughters . . . Regardless of the size of the dowry, the gifts served two purposes. Land enhanced a woman’s marriageability and thus enabled her to attract a more desirable husband . . . There was a second and more subtle effect which these gifts had on daughters of landowners. They bound the young women and their husbands to the community.” Bethel, *Promiseland*, 63–64.

74. Bethel, *Promiseland*, 105.

75. I am not suggesting that only black farmers chose double-farming. Undoubtedly white farmers did too. Finding Granville County’s black doublers required several years of detailed investigation of black property holdings in the county. A comparable study should be undertaken to determine if and how white farmers engaged in double-farming, but that comparative study is beyond the scope of this work.

76. Population Census, 1880, 108/2/17, and Tax Lists, Fishing Creek township, 1879, 1881, Granville County, North Carolina.

77. William Bobbitt, the census enumerator for Fishing Creek township, was notably careless in recording the crops of black farmers. He routinely omitted many food crops, though he seems to have faithfully recorded cash crops and corn. Unfortunately, this makes it impossible to do more than guess about the crop mix on many black farms.

78. Population Census, 1880, 108/2/17, and Tax Lists, Fishing Creek township, 1879, Granville County, North Carolina.

79. Tax Lists, Oxford township, 1876–1898; Population Census, 1880, 107/2/33; and Agricultural Census, 1880, 107/2/6, all Granville County, North Carolina.

80. Tax Lists, Tally Ho township, 1877–1898; Population Census, 1880, 102/2/36; and Agricultural Census, 1880, 102/2/21, all Granville County, North Carolina.

81. Charles Bolton argues that double-counting of landless whites by antebellum census takers reflected those families' tendency to move constantly and to undertake multiple tasks in different locations. Something like this process probably explains also the double-counting of the Lees and the Allens. *Poor Whites in the Antebellum South*, 34.

82. Ages are very hard to pin down, because they differ by several years between the two enumerations. Only the two youngest children are reported at the same age in both cases.

83. Crop yields varied widely on these farms, probably reflecting differences in cultivation equipment, fertilizer, and land quality. Average yields for 25 Granville County black farmers, though, were about 9 bushels per acre of corn, 6 bushels per acre of wheat, and 2–3 acres per bale of cotton. At those levels, the Allens should have harvested about 135 bushels of corn and 48 bushels of wheat. Their cotton yield, one bale for three acres, was low but not sharply out of line with the productivity of their neighbors.

84. The information in tables 4 and 5 was drawn from the 1880 census reports on 128 Granville County farms, sorted by tenure type. There are 48 sharecropping families, 16 cash renters, 28 owners, and 36 double-farmers. The sample was drawn in three stages. First, a one-in-ten sample of all black families listed in the 1880 agricultural census was taken, and sorted by the tenure-type given by the census, i.e., shares, rents, or owns. A second canvas was made through the tax lists to increase the number of owner-operators, in order to make the owner

group large enough for analysis. A third search, for dual tenure farms, was conducted by comparing the census and the tax lists. The proportions of each tenure-type presented in the tables are in no way representative, therefore, of their proportions in the actual population.

85. None of the tenure groups supported more than a handful of elderly dependents. Sharecropping families hosted the largest number of aging members, only five people spread among forty-eight households. Families may have supported aging relatives or neighbors who lived in other households, but those relationships cannot be tracked in the census. I have not worried overmuch about being unable to track aged dependents, since I suspect that, barring incapacitating illness, freedpeople worked until they died. Stories from the slave narratives, missionary letters, and other literary sources certainly confirm that freedpeople still worked in spite of health conditions that, by modern middle-class standards, should have rendered them quite helpless.

86. Population Census, Granville County, North Carolina, 1880, 101/2/41 (Montague), 98/2/35 (Woody), 101/2/16-17 (Forsyth), 107/2/49 (Hart).

87. See for example, Population Census, Granville County, North Carolina, 1880 100/2/7 (Calvin Harris), 100/2/2 (Lawson Hart), 100/2/8-9 (Tony Usry), among others.

4. BUILDING UP THE PEOPLE

1. North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *North Carolina Century Farms*.

2. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 15, p. 351.

3. Foner, *Nothing but Freedom*, 39-40.

4. Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina*, argues that the gerrymandered second district fostered local Republican control at the expense of wider state influence. See also Billings, *Planters and the Making of a "New South,"* for a discussion of the persistence of antebellum elites. Gavin Wright argues that it matters less that the elites didn't change than that their most important holdings changed, from movable property in slaves to immovable property in land. This seems to me highly significant in shaping white economic priorities, but less so in determining the cultural and social spaces available to the freedpeople. See Wright, *Old South, New South*, esp. ch. 2.

5. In *Nothing but Freedom*, 34-36, Eric Foner uses comparisons to other emancipation experiences in Haiti, the British Caribbean, and colonial Africa, to argue that land reform by itself could not have materially altered the freed-

people's prospects. Emancipation in those other areas took its shape as much from politics—international, imperial and intracolonial—as from the presence or absence of land reform. See pp. 34–35.

6. Clement Dowd, *Life of Zebulon Vance*, quoted in Lefler, *North Carolina History Told by Contemporaries*, 367.

7. Berry, *I Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey*, introduction.

8. Alvord, *Semi-Annual Report*, 2nd report, January 1866, pp. 1 and 3.

9. Alvord, *Semi-Annual Report*, January 1866, pp. 3, 9–10. Six months later, South Carolina reported thirty-eight independent schools (July 1866, p. 4 for South Carolina). In Louisiana, freedpeople began petitioning for schools in 1866 and by 1867 were forcing education clauses into their work contracts and using their political clout to ensure that black taxes went to black schools (January 1866, p. 7, and July 1867, pp. 49–50). In Missouri, the United States Colored Troops donated six thousand dollars to create a normal institution to train black teachers (July 1867, p. 61). In 1865, black soldiers won their battle to be paid the same wage as white soldiers. Equal pay was made retroactive to the date of enlistment, entitling many members of the United States Colored Troops to lump sum equalizing payments. These may have been used as part of this large donation. See Berlin et al., *Freedom*, 362–405, esp. 367–68.

10. Alvord, *Semi-Annual Report*, January 1867, pp. 9 and 11.

11. *Ibid.*, July 1866, p. 3.

12. Webber, *Deep Like the Rivers*, chs. 6, 7, and 15.

13. Bell, "Protestant Churches," 63.

14. *Ibid.*, 64; see also Bruce T. Grindahl, "The Religious Interpretation of Experience in a Rural Black Community," in Robert Hall and Carol Stack, *Holding on to the Land and the Lord*, noting the presence of "many ex-slave ministers who, without formal religious training, ministered to small congregations and at revivals" (p. 90).

15. White, *In Search of Kith and Kin*, 17.

16. Bell, "Protestant Churches," 68.

17. *Ibid.*, 57–58.

18. *Ibid.*, 88–89, quoting from Bumpas, "North Carolina Conference As I First Knew It," 170–71.

19. There were approximately twenty thousand Methodists in the southern church as of 1865. By 1871, the northern Methodist churches counted more than twenty-two thousand members, 62 percent of whom were in the two African Methodist Episcopal organizations. See Bell, "Protestant Churches," 91.

20. *Ibid.*, 25.

21. Ibid., 24.

22. McGreachey, *Confronted by Challenge*.

23. Ibid., 204–5.

24. Smith, *African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 126.

25. Ibid., 127.

26. These differences emerged again during the years of the Great Migration, when the northern black urban churches reached out to assist and incorporate rural black migrants. See Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression*.

27. Bell, “Protestant Churches,” 5, 19, for postwar treatment; 10–13, for schools; 31–33, for ordination.

28. Bell, “Protestant Churches,” 21, 25. This was true in urban as well as rural settings. David Tucker documented that, in Memphis, Tennessee, blacks “frankly preferred to have black men in the pulpit.” See Tucker, *Black Pastors and Leaders*, 6.

29. Scotia Seminary for black girls, set up to train schoolteachers, also opened in Concord, North Carolina, with forty-five pupils. See Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., “Committee of Missions for Freedmen,” May 1871, p. 6, for Biddle; p. 7, for Scotia.

30. Ibid., 1870, 1871, 1874, 1875.

31. Bell, “Protestant Churches,” 119–23.

32. Quoted in Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 5.

33. Alvord, *Semi-Annual School Reports*. See among many, January 1866, pp. 8, 12–13; July 1866, pp. 6, 11–12; January 1867, pp. 5, 10, 16, 19, 21, 25, 27; July 1867, pp. 12, 22, 30, 40, 57.

34. Mobley, *James City*, 49–50.

35. Letter, S. Benson Stearnes to Samuel Ashley, November 30, 1865; Letter, Samuel Ashley to Samuel Hunt, December 20, 1865; Letter, David Dickson to Samuel Ashley, December 21, 1865, AMA Letters.

36. DeBoer, *His Truth*, 65. Harris must have been a man of uncommon courage, as his long and solitary walk must have exposed him daily to great danger.

37. Richardson, “Labor Is Rest,” 5.

38. DeBoer, *His Truth*, 41.

39. Ibid., 54–55.

40. Letter, Samuel Ashley to Samuel Hunt, January 9, 1866, AMA Letters.

41. Lucy Haskell to George Whipple, December 30, 1865, and January 12, 1866, AMA Letters. See also Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 474, for appraisal of nearly universal giving of food.

42. Samuel S. Ashley to S. Hunt, Wilmington, North Carolina, November 18, 1965, AMA Letters.
43. DeBoer, *His Truth*, 68.
44. F. C. Lodge to Rev. George Whipple, April 17, 1869, AMA Letters; the practice of carrying fat pine to school to light the stove continued at least into the 1940s. Author interview with James and Mable Morgan, Richlands, North Carolina, July 1988.
45. “Dear Friends,” from James Lowrey [?], December 16, 1865, AMA Letters.
46. S. S. Ashley to Samuel Hunt, November 18, 1865, AMA Letters.
47. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 172, 475; see also Hornsby, *In the Cage*, 35.
48. SPI Reports, 1869, p. 19, for Beaufort; p. 18, for Fayetteville.
49. S. S. Ashley to W. E. Whiting, January 15, 1866, AMA Letters.
50. S. S. Ashley to Samuel Hunt, January 29, 1866, AMA Letters.
51. Jacqueline Jones finds evidence of similar fairs in support of schools arranged by Georgia freedpeople. See *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 62.
52. SPI Reports, 1869, 25.
53. S. S. Ashley to S. Hunt, January 22, 1866, AMA Letters.
54. Ibid.
55. See for example, Alvord, *Semi-Annual School Report*, July 1866, pp. 1–2, 6, 13; January 1867, pp. 1, 19, 22–3, 37; July 1867, pp. 15, 21, 25, 46, 55. See also Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 79–81.
56. Thomas D. Clark commented on white “bafflement” about new educational ideas in his study of local merchants. See Clark, *Pills, Petticoats and Plows*, 188.
57. Lefler, *North Carolina History*, 164.
58. Ibid., 185–88.
59. SPI Reports, 1862–1863, 16. Rev. S. S. Murkland, defending his actions to the Concord Presbytery before his dismissal, invoked an immediate postwar assertion by Calvin H. Wiley that the devastation of the white South was in part its just punishment for the neglect of slave education. This postwar statement seems to fly in the face of Wiley’s wartime embrace of permanent slavery and southern superiority. But Wiley moved with the times, invoking any convenient arguments in support of his unwavering, lifelong advocacy of public education. He probably deserves a full-scale biography.
60. Henderson, *North Carolina*, 302.
61. Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 26–27.

62. Noble, *History of the Public Schools of North Carolina*, 358ff.; see also Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 188.

63. James Anderson sees a virtual repetition of this rapprochement between northern and southern whites happening again between 1900 and 1935. See Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 95–102.

64. Noble, *Public Schools of North Carolina*, 290–91.

65. David Tucker documented the same preference for black leadership, particularly in religion, in Memphis, Tennessee, that Hood invokes for North Carolina. See Tucker, *Black Pastors and Leaders*, 6. Hood spoke even more angrily and more challengingly when he addressed himself to the whole convention on the conservatives' repeated attempts to enshrine racial inequality in the new constitution. Said Hood, "We now have all our rights secured to us by the strong arm of the federal government. We are all enfranchised, some of you are disenfranchised. If the federal government sees fit to punish you for your stubbornness we have no lands to lose, and if we had, they would not be taken from us. If you defeat this constitution you do it at your peril." What a blow it must have been to such people as James Hood when the federal government proved to be a betrayer. See Noble, *History of Public Schools*, 292.

66. Alex McIver, a compliant man untainted by any association with Reconstruction, or with public schooling, was quickly appointed in Ashley's place. See Alex McIver, *Raleigh News and Observer*, special edition on the public schools, 1895, in "Public Schools," volume 138, microfilm reel 35, frames 245–46, NCC.

67. Noble, *Public Schools of North Carolina*, 12.

68. E. P. Hayes to Rev. M. E. Strieby, January 28, 1876, AMA Letters. Hayes complained that parents did not give as liberally now as before the advent of public schools, blaming the decrease in giving on their being "spoiled" by the provision of free schools.

69. W. G. Marts, pastor of Long Church, to Rev. M. E. Strieby, February 8, 1876, AMA Letters.

70. "Public Education in North Carolina," 13; SPI Reports, for the year ending September 1, 1879, p. 40. See also White, "History of Antioch Baptist Church."

71. Du Bois, *Negroes in the United States*, 41–43.

72. Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 30–31. For the impact of this philanthropic priority in the twentieth century, see "Aid to Negro Education from Outside Agencies, 1927–1934."

73. “Public Education in North Carolina,” 13.

74. *Ibid.*, 13ff.

75. G. H. Ferguson, “Some Facts About the Education of Negroes in North Carolina,” 5.

76. White, “Antioch Baptist Church.”

77. White, *In Search of Kith and Kin*, 23 n. 56.

78. *Ibid.*, 17.

79. Land Deeds, vol. 28, April 14, 1874, for New Corinth; vol. 30, August 9, 1871, for Flat Creek; vol. 40, September 2, 1880, for Blue Wing Grove, Granville County, North Carolina. See also, Bethel, *Promiseland*, 61–62.

80. The churches were Flat Creek Baptist (1871), New Corinth Baptist (1874), Huntsville Baptist and St. Peter’s Methodist Episcopal (1876), Oak Grove Baptist and Oxford A.M.E. Zion (1879), Blue Wing Grove Baptist and Ruin Creek Baptist (1880), and Rock Spring Baptist (1887).

81. The ledger’s survival is one of the many miracles of historical research. It was evidently passed for several generations through the family of the fund drive chairman, S. E. Harper, and finally into the hands of his granddaughter, Catherine Harper. Harper children, grandchildren, and perhaps great-grandchildren crayoned exuberantly on its blank pages. The book, without covers and missing many pages, was finally left on a rubbish heap several miles south of the old church itself. There Robert Carter, a local amateur historian, spotted it. He rescued it and determined that it was a document of value. Carter found the St. Paul’s building, the one built from the 1909 fund drive, photographed it, and submitted the ledger, the photograph, and a short history of the church to the manuscript archive at Duke University—all about a year before the building blew down in a storm. Thanks to his efforts, the ledger, the photograph, and the story survive. I am very grateful.

82. I am indebted to Sydney Nathans of Duke University for interpretive help with this ledger item.

83. Carter, “Short Sketch of St. Paul’s Methodist Church.”

84. Bethel, *Promiseland*, 82.

85. Quoted in Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race*, 14.

86. *Ibid.*, 88–89.

87. *Ibid.*, 109.

88. Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina*, 159. Cheatham was at one point an AMA teacher. After a significant career in local and national office, he returned to Granville County to run the “Colored Orphanage” in Oxford.

89. Woodson, *History of the Negro Church*, 199 and 242–43.

90. Wheeler, *Uplifting the Race*, 110.

CONCLUSION

1. McConnell, “Negro in North Carolina Since Reconstruction.” Dissertation examined on microfilm at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

2. *Greensboro Daily News*, April 16, 1947, NCC, Clippings File.

3. Rawick, *American Slave*, vol. 15, p. 116.

4. As the history of the Fourteenth Amendment emphatically demonstrates, out of Reconstruction came a core of new national ideas that have been repeatedly used to expand the grounds on which embattled groups and unpopular ideas can claim the protection of the Constitution.

5. Du Bois, *Negroes in the United States*, 43.

6. *Ibid.*, 98.

7. 12th Census of the United States, 1900, vol. 5, Agriculture, part 1, Farms, Livestock and Animal Products, 108–11.

8. Du Bois, *Negroes in the United States*, 13.

9. *Ibid.*, 13.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Rosengarten, *All God’s Dangers*, 360–61, 435–38.

12. Murray, *Proud Shoes*.

13. White, *In Search of Kith and Kin*, 19.

14. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 387.

15. The quote is adapted from Edmund Morgan. Morgan’s version is “They [northern Republicans] allowed Virginians to compose the documents that founded their republic, and they chose Virginians to chart its course for a generation.” See Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 387.

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Index

Note: **Boldfaced text** marks families whose stories are told in some detail.

- accidents, 71; and sudden death, 71, 73, 76, 78
- accumulation, 62, 76; as ambition, 38; cooperative, 66; methods of, 47, 62–66, 77; poor prospects for success, 69–71; prior to buying land, 62, 66, 72–73; to restore farm after loss, 78; risks of, 38, 67–71
- Adams, Joseph, 22; children of, gardening, 7, 15, 20; growing cotton, 20
- Adams, Lucretia, 11
- Africa, 113
- African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, 21, 105–7, 110, 127; conservative politics, 128–29; disagreements over worship style, 108–9. *See also* Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church (Promised Land); St. Paul’s A.M.E. Church (Rockingham County)
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z.) Church, 105, 114, 127; disagreements over worship style, 108; preferred to Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, 106–7. *See also* Big Zion A.M.E.Z. Church (Granville County); Hood, James (A.M.E.Z. bishop); Oxford A.M.E.Z. Church (Granville County)
- agricultural ladder, 98
- Alabama, 72, 134, 144 (n. 10)
- alcohol, 80; traded at store, 28, 30–33
- Allen, Amos, 50
- Allen, Isabella and John (and family)**, 90–93, 157 (n. 81)
- Allen, Lewis, 26
- Allen, Ned, 90
- Allen, Wesley and Mary**, 48–50
- Alvord, John W., 103–4, 112
- American Freedman’s Union Commission, 112. *See also* missionaries, northern
- American Missionary Association, 111–17; sensitivity to southern whites, 117
- Anderson, Linsey, 67
- Anderson, Polly (teacher), 5
- Antioch Baptist Church (Granville County), 124
- Arrington, Enoch and Rosa, 89, 93
- Arrington, W. W., 12, 20, 145 (n. 29)
- Ashley, Samuel S.**, 113–14, 117–18, 121
- Atkins, Ann (and family)**, 79–82
- Augustus, Sarah Louise, 9
- “Aunt” Eliza (cared for Raleigh orphans), 13–14
- Aycock, Charles, 122–23
- Baptists, 104–6, 127; black members leaving white churches, 105–6; emerging from hidden churches, 124; state convention, 104. *See also individual church names*
- basketry, 7
- Bass, Arthur and Sallie, 60
- Bass, Nancy, 9, 145 (n. 23)
- Baysmore, Joseph, 104–5
- Betts, Ed, 67
- Bible and hymnal, used for fund-raising fair, 115

- Biddle Memorial Institute, 110. *See also* Presbyterians; schools, black, post-secondary
- Big Zion A.M.E.Z. Church (Granville County), 105, 124
- Blue Wing Grove Baptist Church (Granville County), 125, (163 n. 80)
- Boone, Lemuel W. (Baptist elder), 106
- Brooks, Alex and Emiline, 84
- Bryan, Jordan, Mary Ann (Clark), and Nicy**, 16–17, 146 (n. 40)
- Bullock, Reuben and Sudie, 61
- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 12, 103, 113–15
- Burt, Wesley, 61, 87, 152 (n. 28)
- Burton, James and Louisa, 67
- Burton, Robert Oswald (C.M.E. minister), 106–7
- butter, 14, 65, 80
- Camp, Florence (Hardin) and James, 130–31
- Carr, Elias, 52
- cash, 4–5, 11; church building fund, 125–26; earned by slaves, xvii; generated by household economy, 2, 33, 73–74; inherited, 81–82; and men, 143 (n. 9); and merchants, 30–31, 33, 35; need for, on dual-tenure farms, 97–98; paid to schools, 112–13, 115–16
- cash crop, 12, 15–19; and credit, 37, 43–44; and dual tenure, 97
- census: dual tenure farms in, 85–86; hides black landowners, 59–61
- Charleston, Peter, 87
- chattel mortgage, 29, 51; collateral for, 41–44; compared to crop lien, 35–37; flexibility of, 37–41; large purchases, 40; renegotiation of, 39–40, 61; risks of, 38–39
- Cheatham, Henry P., 163 (n. 88); elected to U.S. Congress, 127–28
- chickens, 4, 48, 56, 60, 79; acquired before land, 64–65, 72, 130; gift to teacher, 113; paid to store, 33; prevalence of, 154 (n. 39)
- children, xvi, 4, 12, 15, 50, 62–63, 72–73, 97, 100, 116; adults as virtual, 118; apprenticeship of, 6–8; in Caribbean, 7–8; combining play and work, 7; discrimination in inheritance, 81–82; domestic service of, 7; and gardening, 20–21, 142 (n. 4); labor of, 7, 16, 56; schooling, 92, 102, 121; wages, 6. *See also* family; schools, black; schools, Sabbath; schools, white
- churches, black, 13, 29, 98, 119; antebellum roots, 104, 142 (n. 5); building and rebuilding, 124–26; charity given by, 126; compared with schools, 101–3; control of, 123–24, 129; disagreements over worship style, 108; homecomings, 55, 124; land donated for, 77, 105; money given to, 110, 125–26; and politics, 127–29, 135; urban, northern, 160 (n. 26); white churches, cede control, 108–11; white churches, separation from, 105–8
- churches, white, 13, 127; abandoned building used for black school, 115; assisting black members to leave, 105–8; and politics, 127. *See also* Dorland, Luke (preacher); Murkland, Mary and S. S.
- Clark, Elias and Nicy (and family)**, 15–17, 146 (n. 40)
- Clement, Thomas D. (merchant), 26, 44–45, 48–49
- clergy, black, 104, 108–10, 126, 159 (n. 14). *See also* Baysmore, Joseph; Burton, Robert Oswald (C.M.E. minister); Cowan, Harry (preacher); Heard, William H. (minister); Hood, James (A.M.E.Z. bishop); Moragne, Isaac (pastor); Phillips, Charles (C.M.E. bishop)
- Cogwell, Henderson and Rufus, 66
- Colored Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church, 106–7, 127
- community life, xviii; ambitions for, 100–101; and churches, 29, 123–24, 126–29; institutions necessary for, xxii, 98, 100; and landowning, 83; young people leaving, 55
- constitution: of North Carolina, 120–21; of South Carolina, 54; of United States, xv, 164 (n. 4)
- cotton, 6–7, 91–92; on dual tenure farms, 95, 97–98; “family crop,” 15–19; fear of

- selling, 68; mortgaged, 43; proportion kept by tenants, 66
- Cousins, Elizabeth and William (and family)**, 89, 93
- Cowan, Harry (preacher), 104–5
- credit, 24–25, 71–72, 133; and crop choice, 88, 95; and household economy, 27–28; and inheritance, 76–78; and race, 26; risk bankruptcy for advancement, 42, 47–48, 73
- Crews, Calvin, 70
- crop lien, 29; compared with chattel mortgage, 35–37, 51; desperation measure, 45–46; reveals neighborhood structure, 87
- Curtis, Alexander, 26
- Curtis, Hawkins, 87
- Curtis, Mattie, 15, 68
- Daffin, Sallie (teacher)**, 117
- Dalton, Charles Lee and Ellen (Irving), 60, 152 (n. 24)
- Davis & Gregory (merchants), 77
- Democratic Party, 121, 127, 144 (n. 11)
- Dickson, David (teacher), 112, 114
- Dickson, Ellis, 65–66
- Dockett, Daniel**, 33–35
- Dorland, Luke (preacher), 107, 110, 112
- double farms. *See* dual tenure farms
- Douglass, Frederick, xvii, 144 (n. 19)
- Downey, Louisa, 42
- draft animals, 40, 46–48, 54, 62, 70, 79–80, 87–91; acquired before land, 56, 64–66, 78, 130; as collateral, 39, 42; importance to farm, 47, 92, 154 (n. 39); inherited, 81–82; risk of buying, 44; shared, 66
- dual tenure farms, 133; advantages over ownership, 88, 93–94; and cash, 98; compared to owners, renters, sharecroppers, 94–98; crop choices on, 91–92, 93–98; definition of, 84; finding in census, 85–86; and neighborhood structure, 87–88; and small farms, 86–87; use in crises, 46–47, 94; and white farmers, 156 (n. 75)
- Du Bois, W. E. B., 133–34
- Durham, Exter and Tempie (Herndon), 56, 64–65
- Eaton, John and Mary (Atkins), 79, 81–82
- Eaves, John B., 127
- eggs, 6, 7, 14, 28; on consignment, 35; gift to teachers, 113; paid to store, 33
- Ellis, Hilliard, 15, 68
- emancipation, 100–102, 158 (n. 5); as a beginning, xv–xvii, xxiii, 1, 23, 131–32, 135; and “free labor,” 12; fresh energy for work, 9; gradual, 7–8, 101; labor shortage, 10–11; religious renewal, 104–5; self-teaching began at, 103–4; white resistance to, 102
- Evans, John, 23
- Evans, S. M. (merchant), 30–35
- exodus, from North Carolina (1878–79), 144 (n. 11)
- family, 7, 8, 12; and churches, 124; discrimination in inheritance, 81–82; grandparents in, xvi, 7, 8, 10, 21–22, 77, 100, 145 (n. 24), 158 (n. 85); as a labor unit, xxii–xxiii, 1, 7, 9, 12–13, 15–17, 21–23, 62–63, 78–79, 89–93, 96–97, 130–31, 133–35, 146 (n. 45); and land and marriage, 82, 130; mothers, 8, 12–13, 21–22, 63; multiple landowners in, 67, 78; non-nuclear, 97; orphans, 13–14, 163 (n. 88); providing for, 41–42, 50, 82; and tenure type, 96–98; young people leaving community, 55
- farm equipment, 44–45, 54, 62, 75, 80, 91; acquired before land, 130; buying, risks of, 48–49; as collateral, 29, 38–40, 42, 47; failure of, 34; lost to taxes, 80–81
- Faucette, Lindsey**, 63–65
- Federal Writer’s Project, 55, 72
- fertilizer, 80, 87; as collateral, 40–41
- Flat Creek Baptist Church (Granville County), 125, 163 (n. 80)
- food crops, 43, 48–49, 64, 79, 88, 91–92, 113; mortgaged, 45–47; proportions kept by sharecroppers, 65–66; and farm tenure, 93–95
- Forsyth, Easter and Richard, 97
- freedmen, 16, 19–20, 34
- Freedmen’s Bureau. *See* Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands

- freedwomen, xvi; benefits of their
housework, 145 (n. 25); controlling
labor of, 12, 15, 19; intimidation of, 11;
labor accounted for, 16; labor reduction
by, xvi, 6, 10; wages, 15, 20
- Freeman, Frank, 57
- fruits and vegetables, 6, 7, 20, 31, 79–80,
113
- fund-raising: Bible and hymnal used for,
115–16; collaborations with missionaries,
115–16; “voting contest,” 125–26
- gardens, 7, 14, 21, 28; prevented
borrowing, 60, 130–31; produce paid
to the store, 33–35; under slavery,
142 (n. 4)
- Garrett, William Channing, 111
- Georgia, 9, 71
- government, national, 53–54, 134, 162
(n. 65). *See also* Cheatham, Henry P.;
O’Hara, James
- government, state: and schools, 102,
119–23; and land, 52, 54
- Grandy, Henry C. and Lottie (and
family)**, 72–73, 84, 90
- Great Migration, the, 160 (n. 26)
- Harper, S. E. and Catherine, 163 (n. 81)
- Harris, Alex, 39
- Harris, Dina and James (and family)**,
59–60, 90, 92–93
- Harris, Elizabeth (Johnson)**, 7, 21–23,
55–56
- Harris, Robert (teacher), 112–13
- Harris, Sarah Walton, 62–63
- Hart, Lawson and Sarah, 84
- Hart, Salina and Woodson, 97
- Haskell, Lucy (teacher), 8, 113
- hauling, 7, 33, 126
- Hawkins, Indiana, 56
- Hawley, Bettie and Thomas, 9
- Heard, William H. (minister), 125
- Herndon, Betsy and George, 56
- Higgins, Napoleon, 68
- Highgate, Edmonia (teacher), 113
- Hillery, William, 114
- Hood, James (A.M.E.Z. bishop)**, 116,
120–21, 162 (n. 65)
- household economy: and capital, xx; cash
from, 2, 33; and churches, 110, 125–26;
comforts provided, 145 (n. 25); and
credit, 28, 42, 44; definition of, 3, 93;
discretionary income, 2, 4; and draft
animals, 66; entrepreneurial, xviii, 2, 98;
family labor in, 10, 12–13, 32, 63–64,
133; freedpeople, slaves and white
yeomen compared, xvi–xix, 140 (n. 5);
and gender, 63, 152 (n. 24); and half-
holiday, 15, 17; image of, 130; loss of,
78–79; and safety, xviii, xix, 1, 4, 23,
44, 69; and schools, 112–14, 121–23;
shortcomings, 100, 141 (n. 18); staple
crops in, 15–17, 19, 146 (n. 45); and
tenancy, 2, 5, 19; textiles in, 7, 22, 28,
30, 33–35
- household goods, 44, 62, 74–75, 78,
80; acquired before land, 64; as
collateral, 28–29, 39; compared with
white farmers, 155 (n. 61); gift from
teachers, 113; given to churches, 125–26;
sold to buy land, 67; sold to save land,
73–75
- household production. *See* household
economy
- hunger, 64
- Hunt, Granville (mortgaged manure),
40–41
- Hunt, Peter and Robert, 66, 69–70,
87
- Huntsville Baptist Church (Granville
County), 124, 163 (n. 80)
- independence: alarming to white
educators, 118; of churches, 126–27;
and credit, 5; desired by freedpeople,
5, 100; of schools, 121; white farmers
losing, 72
- Indiana, exodus to, from North Carolina,
144 (n. 11)
- inheritance, 67, 76–83; apportioned
while living, 81–82; in cash, 81–82;
discrimination among heirs, 81–82; in
livestock, 81–82; lost to debt, 76–78;
new accumulation after loss of, 78;
none from father, 57, 72; son as
executor, 77–79

- James, Capt. (Rev.) Horace, 54. *See also*
 North Carolina, James City
- Jett, Henry, 106
- Kearsey, Archibald and Sarah, 84
- Kelly, John O., 65, 145 (n. 29)
- Knott, Henry, 33
- land: buying, 29, 44, 130–31; selling, 29;
 whites holding on to, 53, 101
- Landis, Noah, 44–45
- landlords, white, 25; kinship relations
 with, 59; labor records, 4, 15–16; and
 labor reduction, xvi; as neighbors, 87;
 profit from household economy, 3; and
 tenant mobility, 45
- land ownership, black, 51, 57, 64, 68, 133;
 allies in achieving, 53–57, 151 (n. 12);
 in census, 59–61; and debt, 71, 74;
 disadvantages of, 75, 88, 93; and dual
 tenure, 86–88, 93–98; extent of
 (Edgecombe County), 53; and family,
 82–83; and household economy, 98;
 increase of small farms, 59; multiple
 purchases, 66–69; and politics, 68,
 134–35; town lots and farming, 152
 (n. 26); visibility of, 53, 61–63, 68,
 83, 87
- Lee, Nancy and Ottawa**, xxii–xxiii, 141
 (n. 23), 157 (n. 81)
- Lenoir, Andy, Ervin, Isaac, John, Larkin,
 Pervis, Uriah, 5
- Lenoir, Thomas, 4–5
- literacy, 122, 132
- Littlejohn, John, 87
- livestock, 14, 20, 28–29, 44–45, 47–49,
 60, 62, 70, 89, 91; acquired before land,
 56, 64–65, 72–73, 78; as collateral, 39;
 on dual tenure farms, 94–95; farming
 without, 73, 154 (n. 39); inherited,
 81–82; as meat, 14, 31; as milk, 34–35,
 65, 79–80; produce paid to store, 33–35;
 shared, 66; sold to buy land, 67; sold
 to pay taxes, 79–80; sold to save land,
 73, 75; in twentieth century, 154 (n. 43)
- Long, Amos and Minnie, 153 (n. 39)
- Long, Thomas and Bob, 143 (n. 6)
- Lowry, James, 114
- Mallory, William, 70
- Mangum, Jesse, 149 (n. 25)
- Mangum, Junius, 87
- Maryland, 113
- masculinity: and cash exchange, 143
 (n. 9); and female labor, 10; and
 household economy, 32, 152 (n. 24);
 prerogatives infringing, xvii
- May, Amanda and Rodin (and family)**,
 15–16, 146 (n. 43, 44)
- McAdden, Addison and Ann (and
 family)**, 41–42
- McDonald, Sarah (nurse), 9
- merchant, 25–26, 46, 48–49, 77, 147
 (n. 6); and cash, 10, 35; credit decisions,
 26; and household economy, 30–35;
 pricing, 29, 39, 45; supervision by, 3,
 6; in twentieth century, 148 (n. 14)
- Methodists: Bible and hymnal in
 fund-raiser, 115–16; black members
 leaving white churches, 105–7, 159
 (n. 19); church building drive, 125–26;
 disagreements over worship style,
 108–9; and politics, 127
- missionaries, northern, 102–3, 122;
 alliance with freedpeople, 102, 117–22;
 built on independent schools, 112;
 collaborative funding, 115–16; critical
 of black independence, 122; harassment
 of, 116; paternalism of, 117–18; post-
 secondary schools, 116; segregated,
 118–19; twentieth century 162 (n. 72);
 and white southerners, 116, 118–20
- Mitchner, Patsy Gorman, 131
- mobility, geographic, 66
- mobility, social, 97–98, 134–35
- Mobley, Hardy, 113
- modernization, xxi, 141 (n. 20)
- Montague, Henrietta and William (and
 family), 97
- Moragne, Isaac (pastor), 126
- Morgan, James and Mable, 161 (n. 44)
- Morris (old slave), 144 (n. 18)
- Morris (teacher), 112
- Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church (Promised
 Land), 126
- Murkland, Mary and S. S., 108, 110, 161
 (n. 59)

- New Corinth Baptist Church (Granville County), 125, 163 (n. 80)
- New York, 113
- Norman, Ann, xxii
- North Carolina (other than Granville County): Apex, 106; Beaufort County, 14–19, 106; Charlotte, 110; Concord, 160 (n. 29); Edgecombe County, 53; Fayetteville, 112–14; Franklinton, 8; Friendship, 106; Goldsboro, 68, 103; Greensboro, 130–31; Halifax County, 104–5, 133; Hyde County, 143 (n. 7); James City, 52–53, 112; Kinston, 65–66; Madison, 60; Murfreesboro, 106; Northhampton County, 105, 143 (n. 6); Person County, 143 (n. 6); Raleigh, 20, 65, 68, 106, 111, 122; Reidsville, 60; Richlands, 161 (n. 44); Rockingham County, 125–26; Roxboro, 143 (n. 6); Smithville, 112; Warren County, 133; Wilmington, 113–15, 117; Wilson County, 68
- North Carolina Colored Baptist State Convention, 104
- North Carolina Mutual Assurance Company, 130
- Norwood, Elias, 5
- Norwood, Ellen and Robert (and family)**, 44–49, 84, 90, 93
- nursing, 7, 9, 12–13
- Oak Grove Baptist Church (Granville County), 163 (n. 80)
- Oberlin College, 113
- O'Hara, James, 43, 52–53, 63, 74
- Oxford A.M.E.Z. Church (Granville County), 163 (n. 80)
- panic of 1893, 75
- Parham, Allen and Kitty (and family)**, 100
- patch. *See* provision plot
- patronage, white, 55–59
- Payne, Daniel A. (A.M.E. bishop), 109
- personal property. *See* household goods
- Pettiford, James R., 70
- philanthropists, northern. *See* Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands; missionaries, northern
- Phillips, Charles (C.M.E. bishop), 127
- politics: and apprenticeship, 8; and land ownership, 68, 134–35; links to religion, 127–28; voting rights and education, 111. *See also* Baysmore, Joseph; Cheatham, Henry P.; O'Hara, James
- Pool, Robert, 8
- Presbyterians, 106, 112; Biddle Memorial Institute, 110; black clergy, 108–10; blacks leaving white churches, 105–8; disagreements over worship style, 108–9; Scotia seminary for girls, 160 (n. 29); white, money for black churches, 110; white, refused to create black schools, 106; white, split over slavery, 105
- prosperity: and color, 57; dangers of, xix, 3, 68–69, 83, 93; preaching about, 128–29
- Protestant Episcopal Church, 111, 134
- provision plot, 6, 12, 15, 20
- Purvis Chapel (Beaufort), 106
- racism, 110, 117, 119
- Ragland, Mary and Robert, 85
- [Ramsay], Anthony, 142 (n. 6)
- Reconstruction, 6, 118, 123, 131–32, 135–36, 162 (n. 66), 164 (n. 4)
- Redeemers, 102, 121
- Republican Party, 54, 127, 144 (n. 11), 158 (n. 4)
- Ridley, Benjamin, 89, 93
- Ridley, Bromfield, 33
- risk: minimized by flexibility, 38; necessary for survival, 38, 47–48
- Roberts, McKinsey and Rebecca, 77
- Rock Spring Baptist Church (Granville County), 163 (n. 80)
- Ross, Madison and Vina (and family), 82
- Ruin Creek Baptist Church (Granville County), 163 (n. 80)
- St. Paul's A.M.E. Church (Rockingham County), 125–26
- St. Peter's Methodist Episcopal (Granville County), 163 (n. 80)
- Sandford, James, 33
- Sanford, Thomas, xxii, 141 (n. 22)

saving, 7, 62–64, 73, 130

Scales, Anderson and Cora (Dalton) (and family), 20–22

schools, black, 29, 98; achievements, 100, 122, 132, 134–35; compared with churches, 102–3; conditions in, 116, 121–23; intimidation, 108, 116, 119; irregular, 103–4, 108, 112; missionaries, 112, 114–17, 119; post-secondary, 100, 110–11, 116, 159 (n. 9), 160 (n. 29); self-help and, 103–4, 111–12, 115, 121–22, 130–31; teachers for, 116–17, 122, 134, 163 (n. 88); tuition in, 104, 112, 122; twentieth century, 122–23, 130–31; white control of, 101–2, 106, 111–12, 119, 120–21, 123–24, 135. *See also* Camp, Florence (Hardin) and James; schools, Sabbath; schools, white

schools, Sabbath, 104–6

schools, white, 118–21

Scotia Seminary for Girls, 160 (n. 29)

Scott, William, 7, 55–56

sharecropping. *See* tenant farming

Shaw, Nate, xx, 134, 144 (n. 10)

sheriff, 52, 62

Sierra Leone, 113

slaves, 1, 23, 53, 55, 65, 83, 99, 103, 105, 119, 127, 132, 134–35, 161 (n. 59); abandoned quarters used for schools, 115; clergy, 104; as contraband, 53; descendants of, in professions, 134–35; hidden worship, 124, 142 (n. 5); household economy of, xv–xvii, 140 (n. 5), 142 (n. 4); and secrecy, 142 (n. 5); “snakes full of poison,” 131; spouses separated, 144 (n. 17)

South Carolina, 11, 54–55, 68, 82, 126

Stearnes, S. Benson (teacher), 112

Steward, T. G. (minister), 128–29

store accounts, 5, 10, 29, 51, 80; payments against, 30–34; trading a man’s world, 32

success, 47, 50, 59, 69–70

Tally, Charles and Winnie, 89–90, 93

taxes, 44, 67, 88; delinquency, 61, 73, 79–80; increases in 1880s, 44, 48; lists, contents of, 62; lists, dual tenure farms, 85–86; schools and, 118, 120, 122

Taylor, Martha (Atkins), 79–82

Taylor, Ransom Sidney, 65

Taylor, Richard, 82

tenant farming, xv, 1–5; 89–92, 135, 142 (n. 2); absconding from, 130–31; and cash, 97–98; and census, 59–61; compared to dual tenure farmers, 94–98; compared to owners, 75; livestock, 65–66; neighbors, 62, 87; and political pressure, 8; violence, 11

textiles, 7, 22, 28, 30–31, 33–35

Thomas, Jacob, 100, 132

Thomas, Rachel (teacher), 112

Thornton, Margaret and Tom, 12–13, 22

Thorton, William, 33

Thorp, Lewis, 30–33

Thorp, Robert T., 149 (n. 25)

Tilly, Marcus (and family), 77–78

tobacco, xix, xx, 6, 47–49, 80; on dual tenure farms, 95–98; mortgageable, 43–44

trades, non-agricultural, 8, 20, 41, 54, 57, 60, 65, 114, 126

train, 55

Trent River Settlement. *See* North

Carolina, James City

Tuck, C. A. and Louisa B., 125

Tucker, Thomas (teacher), 113

Union Army: black soldiers, 104, 127, 159 (n. 9); and land, 53; rescues boy, 8; Sherman, General William T., 114

Vance, Zebulon, 102, 140 (n. 13)

Virginia, 112–14

wages, xxiii, 12, 20, 35, 63; of elders, 9; at harvest, 15; male, supported by female labor shortage, 11; part of household economy, 6

Waller, Emily, 66

Walton, Flora and Frank (and family), 62, 153 (n. 31)

Wesley, Charles, 106–7

Wharton, Rufus, 14–19, 22

Whitaker, George and Hannah, 55–56

White, Beverly, 82

INDEX

- whites, landless, 140 (n. 11), 145 (n. 26),
157 (n. 81)
- white yeomen, xvi–xviii, 25, 99; compared
with freedpeople, 27–28, 67–68, 71–72,
155 (n. 61); and dual tenure farming,
156 (n. 75); and household economy,
147 (n. 5)
- Wiley, Calvin H., 118–19, 161 (n. 59)
- Wilkerson, Henson, 33–34, 38
- wood, 7, 14, 48, 73, 80, 89, 91–92, 130;
contributed to schools, 112–14, 161
(n. 44); paid at store, 33
- Woody, Elisha and Mary (and family), 97
- Worth, Jonathan, 119
- Yarborough, Dred and Lavinia (and
family), 76–79**